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# MODERN THEORIES OF SIN

BY

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*(Thesis approved for the Degree of Doctor of Divinity in the University of London)*

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# I

# INTRODUCTORY

I. The Place and Importance of a Theory of Sin.

The Doctrine of Sin in the scheme of Theology—The Formal and the Psychological position—The Confusion in the use of the term 'Sin'—The Practical Importance of a Theory of Sin.

II. The Conflict between the Theological and the General View of Sin.

Agreement broken up—Ethics no longer an Ally—The change in General Opinion—The Tendency of this Change—The Appeal to Literature impossible—The Crisis must be faced.

III. The Neglect of this Subject in Modern Theology.

Insufficient Treatment in Theological Manuals — The Scarcity of Monographs—The Pelagian Controversy a Cause —Augustinianism impossible—The Subject must be reopened.

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# I

# The Place and Importance of a Theory of Sin

The Doctrine of Sin occupies an important and determinative position in the system of Christian Theology. It diagnoses the disease and defines the injury that leave man in need of the Christian Redemption. It is commonly stated, therefore, that the idea and estimate of sin must regulate our sense of the need of salvation, and must determine its nature and application; the ability to appreciate the Christian Gospel must depend upon a correct and serious estimate of the awfulness of human sin. This judgment, if correct, would make the Doctrine of Sin fundamental to the whole scheme of Christian Theology; it would regulate the conception of Reconciliation and Redemption, and would thus influence the anthropological and soteriological branches of Theology. It is in the idea of sin, therefore, that both those who attack and those who defend the Christian view of things recognize the vulnerable position. Show that the orthodox conception of sin is impossible and the whole of Christian thinking on the problem of existence is discredited; thus the enemies of Christian Theology. Its apologists likewise count a definite attitude on the subject of sin as a foremost defence against any weakening of the Christian position.

It is to be doubted, however, whether this fundamental position can be granted to the Doctrine of Sin. In the historic evolution of Christian theology, it was the Doctrine of the Person of Christ that first entered the

realm of critical discussion, and only after Western influences became dominant did the area of conflict move towards the problem of Sin. And yet it was not until after the discussion of sin in the Pelagian controversy that Christian thought became more closely exercised with the Doctrine of Redemption, and an endeavour was made to find a Theory of the Atonement. Historically and logically, therefore, it must be admitted that the conception of sin does seem fundamental, at least, to the redemptive element in the Christian religion and to the soteriological side of Christian theology. Now, while the logical and historical order may be convenient for a Theological Manual, the theology that means to be vital and experimental will be more desirous of following the psychological order, and this may be different and even inverse. The sense of sin is certainly gained by man through the revelation of holiness; the shadow of sin wears its deepest night only in the light of the Cross; the proclamation of free redemption may be the means of awakening the consciousness of need. Psychologically, it is certain that no sense of need or of shortcoming can be aroused in the mind apart from some apprehension, however dimly conscious and imperfect, of a higher possibility and a higher demand. In the construction of a pure theology it may be necessary that the order of thought shall be logical, and that sin be defined by what it is seen to be in the full revelation of the Christian ideal; this would give us things as they really are: things as they are in the sight of God; and this has been the usual method of Theology until the rise of the Critical Philosophy. The Old Theology, therefore, started with facts divinely revealed, and so dealt with sin as it is judged by the mind of God. Modern Theology, affected profoundly by the Critical Philosophy, sets out from human experience, and is inclined even to confine itself to an orderly expression of the facts of experience; and this, of course, means limiting the treatment of sin to an examination of the experience, that is, 'the sense

of sin'. To decide which of these two methods is the true one would take us far beyond the limits of our present purpose, and yet it is not without profound importance for our study. In the first place, it will be found that the ideal and Divine standpoint can never be wholly excluded; we have intuitions of things that do not come within actual experience in the ordinary sense of the word; we have mental contact with more than we can understand. The experimental is a limitation within which things can be conveniently discussed, but the limitation is artificial, and the mind cannot be prohibited from straying beyond it. From the experimental point of view sin is only sin when we have a sense of sin: from the ideal point of view sin without sense of sin is still sin, and, indeed, deeper sin just because we are unconscious of it. Yet while the subject may remain an open one when discussed within the realm of pure theology, the psychological and experimental method will certainly be that which will determine Christian pedagogy and the preaching of the Gospel. The dominance of the older method influenced preaching so that it aimed to produce conviction of sin as an indispensable and primary experience. That method was undoubtedly often justified by its results, yet it had many failures and many disastrous consequences. At any rate, modern thought is profoundly sensitive to its possibilities of danger. It seems to make it possible for a belief in the theological idea of sin to be heartily entertained, and even a personal confession of sinfulness to be continually and openly made, when no actual experience of the power and sinfulness of sin is really present. There can be little doubt that such a condition has been proved to exist.

The confusion between the theological and the experimental idea of sin is further deepened by that fact that 'sin' is a word in common use quite outside theological circles, and with a quite other than theological meaning. Because 'sin' is the term used in ordinary literature and common conversation to indicate any divergence from the

commonly accepted ideals of humanity, theology has sometimes been betrayed into appealing to this fact as a sufficient proof of the universal sense of sin. But this is to overlook the fact that between the common use of the term and the term as used in theology there may be, and generally is, a world of difference. 'Sin' has come to be the popular label for the moral evil present in human nature; but whereas in theology Sin is something in man's relations to God, and is generally taken to stand for an act for which the individual, or a state for which the race, is responsible and guilty, in common usage the term may denote a breach of social custom, or a failure to reach the standard held by the person using the term; and all this without any reference to falling short of the glory of God, or without considering whether that standard is accepted by the person charged with the sin, or what degree of responsibility actually exists in the particular case. This distinction can hardly be expected to be observed in non-theological literature, but we might expect in theological works some recognition of this, which would probably prevent any further appeal to the use of the term as an indication of the existence of a state of sin-consciousness.

There are, therefore, two ways of regarding sin: from the transcendental side, as a fact in the sight of God, of which man may be unconscious; or as a fact of which man is conscious; unfortunately, one term does duty for both. 'Guilt' might be used to describe the latter condition, save that it would still be possible to think of men as guilty in the sight and judgment of God and yet themselves unconscious of their guilt; and, therefore, the phrase, 'conviction', or 'sense of sin', must be used here.

The uncertainty regarding the application of terminology, the absence of discussion of the theological method, the confusion between theology and experience —these are the initial difficulties that beset this doctrine, and they have done much to make the discussion so

often irrelevant, and the results generally so barren and unprofitable. We may not feel called upon to decide as to the right method; we may not come to a decision as to the meaning and application of the term, or we may take sides on these questions, but we must first recognize that these questions exist. We may afterwards attempt to reconcile or resolve them; but what we must not do, is confuse or ignore them.

This leaves the position of Sin in the Christian scheme of Theology indeterminate, or at least dependent upon undecided issues. It may, therefore, eventually fall to be treated within the actual experience of God's dealings with man; that is, it may be found to lie within the Doctrine of Redemption, or, if the conviction of universal and personal sin must precede any experience of redemption or acceptance of salvation, then it must certainly be relegated to the region of Apologetics or Natural Theology.

In the face of these important, if often disregarded considerations, it cannot be argued that a theory as to the nature and origin of sin is a mere speculation without vital concern to theology; for it is not with 'sin' as a merely convenient or common term for a phenomenon of human life that the theologian is concerned, since there are conflicting explanations of the phenomenon, but with a certain theory of what the nature of sin is and of how it came to originate, perhaps in the race, but certainly in the individual; a theory of sin's origin which shall make man responsible and guilty; a theory of its nature as rebellious and contumacious that makes it an offence against God, and, therefore, demanding satisfaction, and requiring to be pardoned, as well as calling for deliverance and restoration. It is certainly possible to maintain that, even if man is not personally guilty for his sin, he is still in need of salvation; but in that case salvation would only need to be the illumination of deeper knowledge, or the infusion of superior strength; an idea that many theologians would consider an inadequate account

of the Christian Salvation. It is, therefore, not the mere fact of sin that is determinative for the nature of redemption, but a theory as to what sin is and how it entered the race; just as it is not the fact of disease, but the diagnosis of its nature that regulates the choice of a remedy. A discussion of the various theories of sin raises, therefore, those vital issues which are so often overlooked in the so-called appeals to facts. Moreover, the issue is not one for speculation only; on its conclusions hang important practical results. As we decide, so we shall demand a remedy which involves a radical change in human nature, that shall penetrate to the springs of personality so as to touch a depraved and perverted will, or we shall be content with the method of illumination, education, and the influence of example; and these mean two totally different interpretations of Christianity. Even a discussion as to the origin of sin can no longer be regarded as a vain speculation, and treated as a matter of indifference after the fashion of recent years; for while theological discussion has gradually withdrawn from this part of the subject (owing, doubtless, to the changed interpretation of the doctrinal significance of Genesis iii.), the position thus evacuated has not simply been left vacant; it has been explored and triumphantly claimed for its own by Evolutionary Science. If, therefore, theology has no theory of the origin of sin, it cannot claim that the subject is beyond discussion, for it is now maintained in many quarters that the scientific account of man's origin and development provides a sufficient explanation of the apparent duality of his nature, as due to the survival of elements, which being in conflict with his present aspirations, are felt to be sinful. This explanation is said to make it likely that certain ameliorative methods, such as those provided by education, will prove more beneficial in eradicating 'sin' than the 'redemption' offered under the name of religion. The idea, which still lingers in some quarters, that this subject can be left to those who

have leisure and inclination for philosophical discussion, is thus seen to be altogether ignorant and dangerous, for in other circles it has already passed far beyond academic speculation, and has begun to influence practical affairs. The great and growing belief in the power of knowledge to develop and refine the nature, and gradually to eliminate those evil elements in civilized man and society which survive from animal nature and primitive conditions, has for decades given the impulse that has created the modern educational system. The treatment of criminal offenders and refractory members of society is everywhere being moulded by the theory that ignorance, heredity, and environment are the great contributing causes to evil disposition, with the result that civilized criminology is being adapted to remedial rather than retributive ends. The strange consciousness and splendid dreams that are moving the masses of Europe and America, the doctrine that preaches better conditions as the means to a nobler humanity, and a change in the economic basis, in which profit shall be eliminated, as the salvation of Society from the influence of greed, and from the terrors, ills, and crimes of modern industrialism, all rest, however unconsciously, on the idea that before the light of knowledge and the more equitable distribution of the necessities and comforts of life, the greater part of human sinfulness will disappear. To such hopes and anticipations a theory of sin will either bring some measure of confirmation or declare them illusory and vain.

## II

# The Conflict between the Theological and the General View of Sin

If there was ever a time when 'sin' was a term with a meaning common both to theologians and independent thinkers in other departments, that time has certainly passed away; for there is no point where the divergent tendencies of modern thought and accepted theology are so visible as in the conception of sin and the importance attached to it. This fact alone demands the serious attention of the theologian, and calls him to undertake a fresh analysis of the subject and to attempt a new defence of the Christian point of view. The subject of sin having passed from the realm of universally accepted truths, becomes a subject to be dealt with by Apologetics. Even the preacher can hardly escape feeling that this change of opinion introduces a new difficulty into the proclamation of his message. If he elects to keep apologetics and the apologetic spirit out of the pulpit, he nevertheless cannot hope to approach the subject of sin from the standpoint formerly adopted. If he declines to pass from the declaration of man's sinfulness to an attempt to defend the idea, he must at least recognize that the feeling of sin is one that has to be produced, and he will have to make up his mind as to its nature, sufficiently to enable him to decide whether to rely on declaration and argument, or whether to bring about a consciousness of sin by a reflex judgment consequent on becoming aware

of the holiness of God or the character of Christ. The sense of sin will not be assumed to exist as the normal consciousness of the unregenerate, but will rather be the first mark of the work of God on the soul. That is to say, the sense of sin falls within the experience of redemption. This fact will point out the futility of insisting on the sense of sin as a preliminary to a state of grace, or of hoping for any general success from the attempt to lead men to God by proclaiming the fact of universal sinfulness. Since a personal sense of sin, and not the intellectual acceptance of its existence is the point to be attained, the more this is realized the more will preaching seek to produce this sense in conformity with the laws of psychology, namely, as the effect of realizing the presence within of a Holy Spirit; 'when He is come, He shall convince the world of sin'.

It is evident that whereas Theology could once pass this subject with but little discussion, because it could appeal to the verdict of the independent science of Ethics, the application of the empirical method to ethical research has taken away any support in that direction. The older controversies on ethical method and the nature of the ethical judgment have been passed over as irrelevant by the new method. The 'utilitarian' school, which traced all ethical judgments to the anticipation of pains or pleasures consequent upon certain acts, despite its apparent surrender of the ethical element, managed to yield in the hands of some of its expositors a certain moral effect. But utilitarianism is now rejected as insufficiently radical. The objectivity granted to the deliverance of the moral consciousness, either by the 'intuitional' school in its theory that the moral axiom is eternal and immutable, a subject of cognition equal to the axioms of geometry or logic, or of the 'practical reason' school, which, following Kant in isolating the moral faculty from intellectual explanation, yet gave to it absolute validity—such objectivity is either denied or ignored by the new school in Ethics, which does not

pretend to be anything more than empirical in method, and is quite agnostic as to the ultimate reality of the object of the moral consciousness. 'The clearness and distinctness of the conception of an object easily produces the belief in its truth, so that the intensity of a moral emotion makes him who feels it disposed to objectivize the moral estimate to which it gives rise, in other words, to assign to it universal validity.'* 'The moral concepts are based upon emotions, and the contents of an emotion fall entirely outside the category of truth.'† While this school purposely isolates its researches so as to exclude the problem of the validity of Ethics, and is doing necessary and useful work, yet its relation to theology is entirely neutral, and it can only yield support to a theology which is content to be strictly and finally limited to a basis of Pragmatism.

If theology must fight this battle over sin without being able to refer to Ethics as dealing with the preliminaries of the discussion, still less can we appeal to the general opinion of a large class who stand outside professional theology and are not ethical experts, but who are yet morally earnest men on practical and personal grounds, and expect them to confirm the theological opinion of sin. It is said that Mr. Gladstone, once replying to a question as to what he considered the greatest need of the age, answered: 'A sense of sin'. If he meant a realization of the nature and gravity that theology has been accustomed to attach to sin, then there is at present less likelihood than ever of that need being realized. But the failure of our age to rise to this estimate of sin is certainly not to be traced to a prevailing low ethical standard. The fact of man's evil deeds is by no means being ignored to-day and glossed over by a too superficial estimate of life. The inhumanities of man to man were never more consciously felt; defection from the ethical standard was never so swiftly condemned by

*'The Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas.' Westermarck, Vol. I, 33. †ib.

so wide a section of the people, and there exists a strong desire and attempts are being made in many directions to raise the whole standard of morality, quite apart from the efforts of religious communities. But there is a general impression that the religious estimate of man's evil tendencies concentrates attention on them and produces a false conscience which only goes to entrench evil more securely in man's nature; while more faith is being ventured on the distraction of nobler ideals, the permeation of moral education, and better conditions of common life. Such is the estimate that lies behind a great deal of modern effort at social reform. The person more interested in the theoretical and speculative side of the question is inclined to think that evolution, the influences of heredity and environment, have introduced factors that certainly minimize that responsibility for the total character which Christian thought has been accustomed to assume in charging guilt to the sin of man. Even if he will not venture so far as to assert that 'to know all is to pardon all' he does feel that the question of responsibility so shades off into the unknown that it becomes impossible for any one to pronounce a judgment on the guilt of another, or perhaps even for a man to estimate correctly his own degree of guilt. Even when there is a willing acknowledgment that men are responsible for their sins, there remains the feeling that theology has taken the wrong way to lift man above his sins, by making sin so prominent in its scheme and so vital to a religious experience. The situation is well expressed in a much-discussed statement made by Sir Oliver Lodge in the 'Hibbert Journal' for April 1904*: 'As a matter of fact the higher man of to-day is not worrying about his sins at all, still less about their punishment.' In a subsequent number of the 'Hibbert'† the distinguished physicist, in reply to criticism, explains that he did not mean that men have no thought concerning sin, but they feel that better than speculation on its origin, or con-

* See also 'Man and the Universe', Lodge, 220. † Oct. 1904, p. 7, 9.

centrating attention on sin by brooding lamentation, is the 'more efficacious and altogether more profitable way of putting in so many hours' work per day, and of excluding weeds from the garden by energetic cultivation of healthy plants'.* He goes on to make 'the admission that doubtless there is a sense in which imperfection can be predicated of the whole human race without exception'*; but the former unqualified statement probably hits off more accurately the general tendency of thought among cultured and earnest non-theological thinkers. Even among undoubtedly religious people the subject of sin occupies anything but an important place in their thoughts, and while this condition cannot be traced to moral laxity, since it often exists alongside the loftiest idealism and the highest standard of personal morality, yet it is sometimes alleged that it has baneful effects upon less careful people. Indeed, it is urged in many quarters that there is a decline in spiritual earnestness which is directly chargeable to the too easy capitulation of theology to the susceptibilities of modern culture. The charge calls for patient examination by the serious student of theology, and if the charge is proved it is his business to decide how these deplorable tendencies shall be withstood. It might be possible to reconcile the pronouncements of theology with the facts of science, showing that they are both true within their sphere; a decision might be made to ignore all objections in face of the declarations of the religious consciousness; or it might be found possible to express theology in conformity with scientific fact, and still maintain that it was necessary for the same moral attitude towards sin to rule in the sphere of personal religion. The one position that is clearly impossible is that, which assuming any alteration in the received theological doctrine so as not to conflict with scientific hypothesis to endanger both religion and morality, calls theology to the task of attacking and discrediting the scientific position. This would mean enter-

* Oct., 1904, p. 7, 9.

ing upon an endless controversy, which would fail to carry conviction in either scientific or theological quarters, or even if any measure of success was attained, would leave the task of producing the religious consciousness of sin still to be attempted; for the doctrine of Original Sin, or the acceptance of the historic Fall, is not at all the same thing as a deep sense of personal sin, nor is there any proof that they are ever mutually dependent. It is certainly dangerous tactics to declare that there can be no proper estimate of sin apart from certain theories of sin's nature and origin. What if we are eventually driven to reject such theories, and how shall we explain the fact that lax views of sin have prevailed, whatever theories were current? Indeed, it is possible to turn the tables on this argument and show that the very type of theological opinion which it is proposed to retain or restore has already lent itself to much popular misunderstanding and moral confusion. When the sinfulness of human nature, for which no individual can be held responsible, has been represented as that which exposed men to the wrath of God, quite apart from their own wilful acts of sin, there has surely been some danger of producing an estimate of sin and sins where the emphasis was totally mislaid, and conscience thereby damaged. When preaching which moved along these lines has oftentime been so careless that it was possible for the ordinary listener to infer that the forgiveness of the Christian Salvation was a miraculous interference with the natural entail of sin, granted by God in return for the obedient acceptance of an external arrangement, it was almost impossible to avoid confusion as to the facts and laws of the moral realm. There is, alas! only too much evidence that a double harm has actually resulted: first in the case of many who have accepted this view of things and have been counted as Christians, when the only alteration visible was of a formal kind, and the character is left confirmed in its defects; and then in the case of many who, with this presentation of Christianity,

have been exiled from all its realities and power, because they were sufficiently alive to perceive that this way of regarding things was unsound from the standpoint of conscience and morality. All this has left the conscience of Christendom inaccessible to conviction in regard to many tremendous social crimes, and has conspired to a lowering of the personal standard of common morality, which is leaving our modern world extremely suspicious of the ethical integrity of the Christian way of looking at things.

There remains one further court of appeal to which some thinkers would dismiss all attempts at a reopening of the discussion concerning the problem of sin, where, it is claimed, a most uncompromising verdict in favour of the ordinary theological conception of sin would be returned; namely, to the general opinion held by the great realistic novelists and dramatists. Let writers be chosen whose competence to judge in this matter shall be tested by their realism and the absence of any bias towards theological or philosophical systems; writers whose sole concern is to hold up the mirror to life. Here, it is said, we shall find an antidote to the sentimentalism of modern theology, a recognition of hard facts on which *a priori* speculation shall be completely wrecked; for here we come upon an estimate of the place and power of sin that approaches the conception held by a definitely Christian theology. The value of a verdict from such a court is one that modern theology, desirous above all things of being in touch with facts, will not be tempted to despise; but the verdict is not to be confidently assumed to lie in any one direction without a careful examination of the whole situation; especially must we be on our guard against confusing a recognition of the fact and tragedy of sin with a certain explanation of that fact. It is undoubtedly true that modern imaginative literature is impelled by the motive of describing the real rather than of creating an ideal, and, consequently, we get a picture of men and women in which the reality, extent, sordid-

ness, and subtlety of sin is ruthlessly described, and shown to be the great factor in human tragedy. But if an acknowledgment of the fact of sin is to be the only verdict that we are to gain from an appeal to literature, we need not waste our time, for who that counts is not only too conscious of its existence? The point on which evidence would be more valuable would be where some light was thrown upon the inner working of human consciousness so that we might see how sin arises, how it comes to be felt as sin, and what the issues of sin are when this stage of sin-consciousness is reached. With this as the problem to be investigated, we begin to see what a delicate and complicated question it is that we have referred to this tribunal. We shall need to know how true our author is to human life, and what degree of insight into the hidden working of the human soul he actually possesses; whether he is equally free from the bias of pessimism and the illusion of optimism; whether he is inclined to shape his story by the demands of dramatic *dénouement* or of literary perfection, in which processes shall reach a result which is not always so clearly visible in real life; and especially whether in dealing with this evidence we are at liberty to take all that gives a verdict for the theological conception of sin, and to reject all that tends in an opposite direction, even when it be fundamental to the writer's view of life. It is perfectly impossible for this subject to be investigated within the limits of this present inquiry as it would need to be done if a clear and convincing verdict is to be reached. But it will be sufficient for our purpose if we can produce evidence to show that the relegation of this subject to the bar of literature and the drama would give no real answer to the particular points raised by theology. The mere fact that the modern doctrine of the influence of heredity and environment is generally accepted by authors, is quite enough to confuse whatever evidence we may obtain in this quarter. For instance, the great point in the tragedy of human sin is generally shown to

lie in the suffering that it imposes upon innocent people, especially upon posterity. (Compare Ibsen's 'Ghosts'.) The rise of sin is often traced to the presence of animal passion in a nature only half humanized. (Compare Hardy's 'Tess of the D'Urbevilles'.) In the case where the sinner suffers for his own sin by the gnawing remorse of an awakened conscience either it is regarded as beyond all escape or remedy (as in Shakespeare's 'Macbeth'), or relief is found in confession (see Hawthorne's 'Scarlet Letter'), and in the open assumption of sin's consequences (compare Tolstoi's 'Resurrection'). In this material we find hardly any discussion of the issues that are so vital to theology. The author does not enter into the question of responsibility or guilt, save, perhaps, to show how much there is that minimizes them, nor if the conscience brings pain, is that pain regarded as a sign of a hopeless moral condition, but rather as a proof of life, and by some writers it is seen to be itself redemptive rather than something to be redeemed from. (See 'Old Chester Tales', 84: 'You have sinned, and suffered for your sin. You have asked your Heavenly Father to forgive you, and He has forgiven you. But still you suffer. Woman, be thankful that you can suffer. The worst trouble in the world is the trouble that does not know God, and so does not suffer. Without such knowledge there is no suffering. The sense of sin in the world is the apprehension of Almighty God.') There is not discoverable any general idea among these writers that the suffering of the innocent, while it is recognized everywhere to be a law of life, brings any relief to the person who is the cause of the innocent suffering, when he comes to be aware of the suffering his sin has caused.

It is not for a moment assumed from this evidence adduced that any verdict in an opposite direction from that expected is here made certain. But it is claimed that this evidence distinctly forbids a serious theology to assume that any verdict will be obtained from this

quarter which shall relieve theology from the task of justifying its conception of sin.

From an examination of modern ethical works, in the general attitude of earnest men, and in the verdict of a great portion of literature, wherever these move freely beyond the control of ecclesiastical influence, it will be gathered that there is a complete disagreement on the subject of sin, as commonly conceived by theology, and it would be well to recognize the existence of a real crisis. That crisis is manifested in the intolerable dissensions between scientific, moral, and religious thought, finding its greatest divergence in the utterly different outlook of the Church's redemptive scheme and the 'world's' hope of reformation and progress; and while there are signs that the Church is growing more sympathetic with the latter programme, this sympathy is nothing less than a betrayal of vital interests, so long as no change is supposed to have taken place in the Church's belief on the nature of human sin and the operation of the Divine salvation. If the theological idea of sin is to be retained in all its original meaning and strict application, then our real duty consists in convincing the 'world' of the utter vanity of the hopes which are so prevalent in our present age, or, at least, in standing aside from the modern social movement in sorrowful but dignified aloofness. Only a different interpretation of God's dealings with man, and a new belief in the possibilities of human nature and the destruction of human sin could justify the Church in allying itself with the strenuous efforts which are being made to ameliorate human life, or in seconding those hopes which are stirring the modern mind.

It would be possible, of course, to adopt an attitude of scorn towards the opinions of our age, and to remain content with uttering our convictions and sounding a solemn warning, but this would hardly display the generosity of the Christian spirit, or be in accord with the dignity of theology. The Christian passion for the

salvation of souls can never rest content simply with the deliverance of a sharp and trenchant condemnation of human speculations and efforts, but it will strive to persuade and convince, and so to win men to the truth, conducting ourselves 'in patience, . . . in pureness, in knowledge, in long-suffering, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit'. Nor will a true theology, convinced of the truth of the Christian religion, shirk any task however onerous, or any discussion however involved and difficult, so long as the religious consciousness is justified as a consciousness of reality.

# III

# The Neglect of this Subject in Modern Theology

In face of the present condition of thought on this subject, and the growing change of opinion, passing beyond theory and now beginning to dictate and direct practical reform, the scanty treatment of the subject in modern theology is amazing. In manuals of theology the points that need discussion are largely taken for granted; there is a lack of penetrating criticism, and a lamentable carelessness in the use and definition of terms. The treatment of the subject rarely passes beyond homiletic descriptions of sin, while the great questions involved are treated as unworthy of detailed consideration or simply ignored as non-existent. In recent works that take notice of the scientific attitude and the general objections now raised on all sides, writers are content with showing that the inference of scientific doctrines would destroy all moral responsibility, crowded as that proceeding nevertheless is with logical fallacies, and often having the unfortunate effect of driving those whom it is intended to convince to an opposite conclusion. If the writer attempts to challenge the scientific theories then he enters upon a region which he is rarely equipped to explore, and despite indications of knowing the subject his deliverances are not readily trusted. Besides, is this theology? Is theology dependent upon any theory of the universe? It is often assumed to be so, without considering what this involves for religion. It might be objected that the demand for a deeper treatment of sin

expects too much from general works on theology; yet what a different treatment is usually given to the Atonement, which is supposed to depend upon a correct theological view of sin!

The amazing lack of monographs on the subject is sufficient testimony to the altogether inadequate discussion of the subject. Since the publication of 'Müller's Doctrine of Sin', in 1851, there has appeared no exhaustive treatment of the subject, despite the fact that that great work arrived at conclusions utterly contrary to the received theological conceptions. Tulloch, in his Croall Lectures for 1876, on the Christian Doctrine of Sin, confines himself almost entirely to an exposition of the Biblical doctrine. He does notice, however, the antagonism of the scientific doctrines, but simply opposes to this the Christian conception as offering a more complete explanation of man's nature. Perhaps it may be taken as an apology for this scanty treatment, that the writer professes himself to be out of sympathy with the endeavour to press irreconcilable facts into a system, and states his own preference for holding them apart. And yet he recognizes that the theological doctrine is ambiguous in the various meanings which may be given to the term 'guilt'. He points out that it may mean: (1) the fact that the person has done the wrong; (2) the desert of punishment that attaches to this; (3) the simple liability to punishment; and he claims that it is in this last sense that the Westminster Confession uses the term when it states that the guilt of sin is imputed to us.

Tennant, in his 'Origin and Propagation of Sin', the Hulsean Lectures for 1901-2, although the limits of the work prevent anything like an exhaustive treatment, has made a valuable contribution to the subject, and the work is notable in that it is the first English work on Sin that accepts the hypothesis of Evolution, and seeks to find in it an explanation of the origin of sin. This work will fall to be discussed later.

'Sin', a volume in the Oxford Library of Practical

# Modern Theories of Sin

Theology, by H. S. V. Eck, is prevented by its strictly practical limitations from providing any contribution towards a theory of sin. It starts out from Church teaching rather than from free inquiry, and defends this course on the ground that Church doctrine, with its acknowledged difficulties, nevertheless yields a better answer to the problem than intellectual speculation. The author admits, however, that the term 'sin' must bear a different connotation when used in the phrase 'original sin' from that implied when actual sin is under discussion.

It will be granted that this is a totally inadequate treatment for this subject over such a period as the last fifty years, when it would be expected that the question would be raised afresh owing to the work of Darwin, Huxley, and others, and it is difficult to discover the reasons for this neglect.

The fact that the subject has already been the centre of a great theological controversy in the history of the Church, the outcome of which resulted in a victory for the accepted doctrine of sin, may be the reason for the lack of modern discussion. The issues of the Pelagian controversy do not directly concern our inquiry, but the assumption that we can to-day start off from the position of Augustine must be due to great ignorance of that famous controversy. It is true that the system of Pelagius, with its atomistic view of sin and its exaggerated individualism, is utterly put out of court by modern conceptions, and there is something offensive in its apparent lack of religious feeling, yet some of its criticisms of Augustinianism remain unanswerable. Augustine, by his intellectual strength, his dramatic religious experience, and his rediscovery of Pauline 'grace', commands our moral sympathy; but his own conception of sin is radically unsound, rests on a mistaken exegesis of Scripture, and necessitates deductions impossible to a Christian view of God and Man. While Augustine endeavours to escape Manichaeism by describing sin as

a lack rather than an entity, yet he gives it a place within humanity which may prove to be really Manichaean in the eternal duality it sets up. All sin is traced to the fall of Adam; its propagation in the race is not due to imitation of Adam's sin, but to the possession of a corrupt nature inherited from Adam, which has left man incapable for any movement towards salvation apart from the help of God's Spirit. This natural condition is the ground and cause of all sins, and is itself sinful, exposing all men to the wrath of God. Now this account of the matter has a certain strength in that it supports the unqualified judgment passed upon our condition by an awakened conscience, which not only condemns our sins, but condemns us for having a nature with sinful tendencies, and finds no language too severe to express the moral pain and repulsion at the nature that has so betrayed us. In his 'History of Dogma', Harnack agrees with Augustinianism as an expression of the judgment the soul passes upon itself, but protests against elevating this subjective judgment into a natural history of sin. If this statement penetrates to the heart of the matter, then no agreement can be looked for between the natural and the religious account of sin; they will not only be independent, but contradictory. This involves such a fundamental dualism that it should not be accepted until we have undertaken an examination of what the natural history of sin is, and of what the religious judgment of sin actually contributes. But the religious appeal in Augustinianism vanishes on a closer inquiry. There are some general features of the Augustinian system abhorrent to modern thought whose absolute necessity to the whole scheme might be questioned. It might be possible to retain the vital essence of Augustinian theology while rejecting the important transactional position given to the devil, the predestination of a limited number of souls to an effectual response to the work of the Spirit, and the general ecclesiastical limitation of the salvation offered. But it is very doubtful whether we can remove the suspicion of Manichaean

dualism, which, despite Augustine's protest, seems to lurk in the logical deduction of the system; the rejection of baptismal regeneration would overweight the number of the lost to an unthinkable degree, for it would mean that all who died before years of discretion were attained would be lost, and, as a matter of fact, the scheme almost owes its inception to the idea of baptismal regeneration; and it is absolutely impossible to retain Augustine's conception of inherited sin apart from his theory that our corruption is due to the sinfulness of concupiscence, a judgment that condemns marriage as sinful and the cause of the continued transmission of sin; monasticism is the only logical outcome of Augustinianism.

There are intellectual difficulties in the system that leave it riddled with inconsistencies. Augustine is bound to allow that men still retain their freedom, in spite of the fall, and yet he declares that they can do no good; this is not real freedom whatever else it may be. He admits that sin springs from the will, yet it is inherited sin that dominates his scheme, for men will be lost for inherited sin, even when no wilful sin has been added. In shifting the whole problem of the origin of sin from man's present condition to the initial transgression of Adam so far from getting nearer to a solution, simply intensifies the difficulty, for sin in man as he now is, is explicable on the ground of his possessing a sinful nature, but it is inexplicable in Adam who, *ex hypothesi,* was created good.

The moral difficulties inherent in the scheme are stupendous. A conflict with all sane judgment is felt in the contention that original sin—that is, the natural state from which sin springs—is to be counted more serious than actual sin itself. This might perhaps be justified on the understanding that original sin is the ground and fount of *all* actual sin; but how can this explanation be reconciled with the idea that original sin can only be removed by the rite of baptism, while actual sin can be removed by penance. The suspicion of moral confusion

is deepened when we observe that concupiscence is made the greatest of all sins.

The necessity for reopening the subject is therefore not obviated by the result of the Pelagian controversy.

There is probably much cause for the evasion of this subject in the general abandonment of the historical character of Genesis iii., for this leaves us with no account in the Bible of the origin of sin, thus excluding the subject from a strictly Biblical theology. Since the subject, moreover, involves a discussion of free will and determinism, it has come to be regarded as belonging rather to the sphere of philosophy than theology.

The relegation of the theory of sin to another department of thought is acquiesced in, doubtless because it is assumed that the theological idea of sin is supported by the conscience; that is to say, there is no need for an Apologetic to convince the intellect; if the intellect is not persuaded the cause lies deeper, in moral reasons. But it remains to be shown whether the conscience ever gives a theological declaration of any kind, and especially on such an intricate subject as the cause of sin. At any rate, men exist who cannot be charged with moral insensibility, and whose consciences are particularly tender, who cannot accept the theological account of sin, and have questioned its truth.

On every count, therefore, the subject needs to be reopened, and a fresh inquiry undertaken in the frankest possible spirit. We shall therefore have to investigate the theories put forward by philosophers and theologians, take account of the facts alleged by Science and examine the pronouncement of the enlightened conscience, inquire into the general opinion of modern thought together with the criticisms urged against their tendency, and so see if there is any line of thought still left open along which we may advance in the hope of receiving some new light on what is the greatest subjective problem of human personality, and along which we may come to see more clearly what is the true method of human salvation. It

may be that certain theological notions will have to be rejected; we may have to concede our case to the evolutionists; or it may be found that the moral judgment of the Christian conscience only needs to be expressed in terms suitable to the intellectual and moral outlook of the age, and that this can be done without betraying any vital interests. At any rate, the facts must be resolutely faced, and where the facts are ambiguous or indecisive, we must be careful lest we make our conclusions dependent on any set of assumptions that time may overturn.

It is unnecessary for us to undertake an examination of the entire historical development of the doctrine of sin. We shall confine ourselves to theories put forward as explanations of sin, and to those which have been raised in modern times. We shall find that this limitation of area and scope will not shut out any factor essential to a thorough understanding of the entire subject, while it will save us from becoming involved in questions no longer of serious importance or meaning to our modern outlook and method of thought. Fortunately there can be no doubt as to where we ought to begin: modern philosophy takes its rise from Kant's 'Critique', and modern theology has been profoundly influenced by the Kantian philosophy; and it is with Kant that the question of sin assumes a new importance, is treated with an unusual earnestness, and invested with a tremendous gravity.

## II

## CRITICAL

I. Theories which trace Sin to the Will of Man.

Kant—Coleridge—Müller.

II. Theories which regard Sin as a Necessity.

Schelling—Weisse—Hegel.

III. Theories which seek to explain Sin by confining it within the bounds of Religion.

Schleiermacher—Ritschl.

IV. Theories which seek to explain Sin from Empirical Observation.

Pfleiderer—Tennant—Conclusion.

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# I

# Theories which trace Sin to the Will of Man

It falls to us to examine, first of all, those theories which refer sin to the will of man, and find therein a sufficient cause of sin, and, therefore, the final conclusion of an inquiry into the origin of sin. But among these there should be carefully distinguished those which find the ground of sin in the *freedom* of the will, and those which find the will of man to be disposed towards evil and so account for sin. On a superficial glance all such theories seem open to serious objections. If the will of man is a point of spontaneous origination, absolutely undetermined and unconditionally free, then whatever direction is taken is a matter of chance. A direction towards evil would then always be possible, but it would be sufficiently explained by the *arbitrariness* of the will, and there would be no condemnation called for in that case, since the movement would be altogether without moral significance; for if the choosing of an evil course is to be blameworthy, that will not be satisfied by the mere possibility of an opposite course being taken, but there must be a contradiction and resistance to some good which by its very nature presents attraction to the agent, and is capable of exerting an influence over him. Now, since the universal tendency is in a direction towards evil it would seem that pure arbitrariness cannot be a sufficient cause for a universal effect, since it would also be a sufficient cause for the opposite effect, which, however, is not found to exist. If, on the

other hand, we conceive of the will of man as free, in the sense that it is always able to respond to the moral command to goodness, and if that goodness presents itself to the will as altogether desirable, the sufficient end and actual realization of its volitional freedom, then we have to account for the fact that, in spite of all this, man's will is said to turn always to evil; that is, we have a statement of the factors of the situation leading us to expect, on the assumption that man is a moral being, a certain result, with an actual result in experience directly opposite. These considerations suggest that the will of man is not the ultimate and absolute cause of sin. Now, if this universal direction towards evil is due to the existence of a tendency towards evil in the will itself, then we are not back at the origin of sin, but have still to inquire how the will received this tendency, for a will inclined towards evil only follows its expected bias, and is therefore not sinful in the strict sense. It should be noted that the received doctrine of sin endeavours to preserve both these conceptions: that man's nature, at least now, is corrupt, and that man is responsible and guilty for that corruption and for all that springs from it.

We must, therefore, turn to those thinkers who have worked at our subject from this point of view, and see whether they have succeeded in reconciling the opposites of freedom and corruption, have escaped the objections apparently attaching to both, or have justified the dualism. And first and greatest of all such is the philosopher Emmanuel Kant.

## Kant

Under the reign of the Illuminationists, the School of thinkers who were in the ascendant prior to the life and activity of Kant, interest in the subject of sin had fallen away, and there had taken place a diminution of any serious estimate of its gravity. From the standpoint of

# Modern Theories of Sin

Rationalism, the attack upon the Church idea of Original Sin had been so successful as to leave the doctrine in disrepute. Confining their attention to the individual problem of sin the followers of the *Aufklärung* had failed to find any rational explanation of guilt or any absolute standard of moral law, and concluded, therefore, that sin was nothing more than a natural weakness attaching to man's constitution. Kant's philosophy, inspired by a deeper moral earnestness, rejected that explanation as inadequate, in that it failed to do justice to the verdict of conscience, and in opposition to their teaching, declared the presence in man of 'a radical evil', and so introduces a graver note into philosophy, and marks an epoch in the conception of sin.

In the Critique of Pure Reason Kant had shown that the rational faculty had no means of getting into touch with reality; does not know the thing-in-itself. We only know phenomena, and these are arranged by the mind in *a priori*, but subjective categories, such as space and time, which cannot attach to things-in-themselves. The higher categories of the understanding and the principles founded on them, such as causality, necessity, etc., are shown to be only *a priori* conditions which make experience possible, and since our experience is only of phenomena, these categories cannot legitimately be extended to reality, or applied to the thing-in-itself. In this scepticism as to our ability to know reality, all rationally demonstrable proof of the existence of God, or of human freedom, is shown to be impossible, both from the nature of the case, and from the hopeless antinomies into which Reason is plunged when it attempts to enter the transcendental area: 'freedom, too, is only then an idea of reason whose objective reality in itself is doubtful'.* This position condemns as futile every attempt to give an intellectual account of the moral life. 'The real morality of actions—their merit or demerit, and even that of our

* 'Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals,' Abbot's Translation, 1st ed. 1879, 115.

own conduct—is completely unknown to us. Our estimate can relate only to their empirical character. How much is the action of free-will, how much is to be ascribed to nature and to blameless error, or to a happy constitution of temperament, no one can discover, nor for this reason determine with perfect justice.'* The right to make a judgment of blameworthiness upon a moral action demands an omniscience which could penetrate 'behind the secret springs of action', or which could be certain that 'the maxim of an action, however right in itself, rested simply on moral grounds'.† Between the moral and the rational account of any human act, there is apparently absolute contradiction. On the one hand, 'man is himself a phenomenon', and therefore all his actions, empirically considered, are but links in a necessitous chain of cause and effect, 'and for this reason all the actions of man in the world of phenomena are determined by his empirical character, and the co-operative causes of nature. If, then, we could investigate all the phenomena of human volition to their lowest foundation in the mind, there would be no action which we could not anticipate with certainty, and recognize to be absolutely necessary from its preceding conditions.'‡ On the other hand, the judgment by which we blame an offender, even when we know of circumstances which influenced him towards wrong, shows that we regard him as free to have withstood temptation, 'and that the action may be considered as completely unconditioned in relation to any state preceding, just as if the agent commenced with an entirely new series of effects.'§ Kant regards such a custom of judgment as 'complete evidence that we are accustomed to think that reason is not affected by sensuous conditions.'‖ But this is surely only complete evidence of custom, and no evidence that the custom is right. Kant, however, vindicates the moral explanation of the

* 'Critique of Pure Reason,' 341; Bohn's Edition, Meiklejohn's Trans., 1878. † 'Metaphysic of Morals,' 33. ‡ 'Critique of Pure Reason,' 340. § ib., 343. ‖ ib., 343.

problem by showing that it is true for man as belonging to the intelligible realm, in respect of the faculties of understanding and reason. Now we are compelled to represent reason as possessed with the faculty of causality, as is 'evident from the *imperatives*, which in the sphere of the practical we impose on many of our executive powers'.* Now reason, in its intelligible character, is not subject to the conditions of time; it is causal and determining, and its effects are seen in man's empirical character. Nor can we ask why those empirical effects are what they are, or why reason and its causality determine certain phenomena as they are, for it is 'a question which admits of no answer'.† We therefore only arrive at an intelligible cause, which we recognize to be free, and which may be the unconditioned condition of phenomena, but about which nothing more can be said. Here Kant's system seems to groan beneath the impossible burden of contradiction it attempts to carry; for this idea of the free moral reason not only simply contradicts much observation, a position which does not trouble Kant with his absolute dualism of phenomenon and noumenon; but when we reach this causal idea it still yields no explanation of the very effects it is supposed to cause. It remains therefore a blank idea, isolated from all understanding, introducing a factor which does nothing to help solve the problem. In the Critique of the Practical Reason, Kant endeavours to show that, while from the standpoint of Pure Reason, or speculation, we are involved in difficulties, from the standpoint of Practical Reason, or the determination of our own acts, this transcendent idea is itself made clear, and makes clear the whole of the moral life. Rational beings have, he claims, an immediate perception of the practical law which announces itself to us as a categorical imperative: 'act only on that maxim whereby thou canst at the same time will that it should become a universal law.'‡ Ethicists have quarrelled with this analysis of the moral

* 'Critique of Pure Reason,' 338. † ib., 344. ‡ 'Metaphysic of Morals,' 54.

imperative (See the passages quoted by Mackenzie, 'Manual of Ethics', 192, and his own criticism in the pages following), and Kant has only brought forward, as an explanation of how the consciousness of the moral law is possible, that it is in the same way as when we are conscious of pure theoretical laws, by attending to the necessity with which reason prescribes them; a method of justification, it should be noted, that his own criticisms have severely damaged. Now we need not stay to inquire whether Kant has correctly analysed the content of the moral imperative, for that he has enunciated something of which all men are more or less conscious, is indisputable. Under the more popular, but less exact name of 'conscience' we recognize an unconditional and authoritative law asserting itself over all our conduct, demanding that we shall do what our reason announces as right, at all times, in all circumstances, with whatever consequences, and from the purest motives; that is, we are conscious of a demand for ethical perfection. Kant has, however, certainly confused the command to do the right with an analysis of what is right, and however satisfactory his analysis of that, as a maxim which we could will to be the universal maxim, may seem on consideration, the imperative certainly does not assume this form in announcing itself to us. It is preferable to regard the whole process as due to an intuition of a moral ideal, to which the conscience adds, not so much a command, as an announcement of *obligation;* it does not say, 'be this', but, 'you ought to be this.' (The German language has only one word to do duty for both 'ought' and 'shall'.) Nor is the conscience a faculty of moral judgment, for it does not tell us what is right, but, that we ought to do the right. But at all events, the authoritative and unconditional character of the command is undisputed. It takes no stock of time, or extenuation, and if we endeavour to plead inadvertence, ignorance, or weakness, it then turns and condemns these very things as themselves what ought not to be, and the attempt to find an

excuse in them as most of all what ought not to be. But from this appearance above our mental horizon, of what we should prefer to call the moral ideal, Kant builds up, not only a way of escape from the sceptical conclusions reached in the Critique of Pure Reason, but certain conclusions that are more vital to our inquiry.

We can pass by, as true enough, but as unnecessary for our purpose, his claim that the consciousness of the unconditioned law shows that we belong to a realm above space and time, and we can come to the conclusion he deduces from the presence of the imperative; for it is on this that he erects our practical, absolute freedom: we *ought,* therefore we *can*. Our consciousness of the moral law is the guarantee of freedom. 'A free will and a will subject to moral laws are one and the same.'* If we 'cannot act except *under the idea of freedom*' then we are free from a practical point of view; 'that is to say, all laws which are inseparably connected with freedom have the same force' as if the 'will had been shown to be free in itself by a proof theoretically conclusive'. In thus passing from the consciousness of the moral law to the deduction of freedom Kant recognizes how seriously this conflicts with the Critique of Pure Reason. 'This freedom is not a conception of experience, nor can it be so, since it still remains, even though experience shows the contrary of what on the supposition of freedom are conceived to be its necessary consequences.'† But while this idea of freedom may not be confirmed by experience, the necessity of nature, which is likewise not an empirical conception *is* confirmed by experience. 'Since nothing in phenomena can be explained by the concept of freedom, but the mechanism of nature must constitute the only clue; moreover, when pure reason tries to ascend in the series of causes to the unconditioned, it falls into an antinomy which is entangled in incomprehensibilities on the one side as much as on the other; whilst the latter

*'Metaphysic of Morals,' 95. †'The Critique of Practical Reason,' Abbot's Trans., 1879, 190.

(namely mechanism) is at least as useful in the explanation of phenomena, therefore no one would ever have been so rash as to introduce freedom into science, had not the moral law, and with it practical reason, come in and forced this notion upon us.'* 'There arises from this a dialectic of Reason, since the freedom attributed to the will appears to contradict the necessity of nature, and placed between these two ways, Reason for *speculative* purposes finds the road of physical necessity much more beaten and more appropriate than that of freedom, yet for *practical* purposes the footpath of freedom is the only one on which it is possible to make use of our reason in our conduct.'† This means that in practice we are bound to assume an idea of which we have no speculative proof, and Kant feels that the pressure of this irreconcilable dualism can only be escaped by thinking of man in a twofold sense, as a phenomenon bound by cause and effect, and also as an *intelligible* being, himself a spontaneous and free cause. 'If then we would attribute freedom to a being whose existence is determined in time, we cannot except him from the law of necessity as to all events in his existence, and consequently as to his action also; for that would be to hand him over to blind chance. Now as this law immediately applies to all the causality of things so far as their *existence* is determinable *in time*, it follows that if this were the mode in which he had also to conceive the *existence of things in themselves*, freedom must be rejected as a vain and impossible conception. Consequently, if we would still save it, no other way remains but to consider that the existence of a thing so far as it is determinable in time, and therefore its causality according to the law of physical necessity, belong to *appearance*, and to attribute *freedom to the same being as a thing in itself*.'‡ But Kant does not think that we can do anything to explain this idea; we can only defend it, because to explain a thing is to bring it under laws,

* 'Critique of Practical Reason,' 164. † 'Metaphysic of Morals,' 109.
‡ 'Critique of Practical Reason,' 270.

the object of which can be given in some possible experience; therefore, 'freedom is a mere idea, the objective reality of which can in no wise be shown according to laws of nature, and consequently not in any possible experience; and for this reason it cannot be understood, because we cannot support it by any sort of example or analogy'.* This is the enigma of the critical philosophy: 'we deny objective reality to the supersensible use of the categories in speculation, and yet *admit* this *reality* with respect to the objects of pure, practical reason'.† On this consciousness of the practical law Kant therefore builds up those very ideas which from the standpoint of pure reason were shown to be impossible. The unconditional imperative which shows man he is above time and space, enables him to step out of the fatally determined series which attaches to all appearance of things. And now we can demonstrate the *practical* necessity of freedom, immortality, and God. Having brought us into this intelligible sphere and claimed this realm as man's own, like all idealistic systems, Kant's does nothing to explain how the world of appearances takes its rise from this sphere. Moreover, the two spheres suffer very much by comparison; for while the one is fully explicable, the other is only a realm of ideas which we gaze at, as it were, entranced and somewhat bewildered, ideas apparently without content and beyond all comprehension. Yet we have one supreme gain, in spite of these obvious difficulties: we have gained a foothold for freedom, the supreme necessity for rational being. But having now gained freedom for that being to act according to his own legislative autonomy, we are met with an inexplicable occurrence, namely, that in the presence of this moral law, with the imperative of duty for ever sounding in our ears, with absolute freedom to obey, man fails to attain to obedience and lives in open and flagrant transgression of that

* 'Metaphysic of Morals,' 115. † 'Critique of Practical Reason,' 128.

law. How to deduce this condition from the pure idea of freedom is now more difficult than ever.

In face of these irreconcilable conditions Kant can only assume that there is in human nature a universal propensity to evil, a 'radical badness'. 'Now, this propensity must itself be considered morally bad, and, consequently, not as a natural property, but as something that can be imputed to the man, and, consequently, must consist in maxims of the will which are opposed to the law; but on account of freedom these must be looked upon as in themselves contingent, which is inconsistent with the universality of this badness, unless the ultimate subjective ground of all maxims is, by whatever means, interwoven with humanity and, as it were, rooted in it; hence we call this a natural propensity to evil, and as the man must nevertheless always incur the blame of it, it may be called even a *radical badness* in human nature, innate, but not the less drawn upon us by ourselves.'* This radical badness must lie very far in, in a universal perversion of the maxims of his being, but we must be careful that we do not take this to mean that human nature is itself evil. 'When we say, then, man is by nature good, or, he is by nature bad, this only means that he contains a primary source (to us inscrutable) of the adoption of good or of the adoption of bad (law violating) maxims.'† Although we speak of these characters as innate, 'yet we must always remember that nature is not to bear the blame of it (if it is bad), or the credit of it (if it is good), but that man himself is the author of it'.‡ 'And when it is said that a man has the one or the other disposition as an innate natural quality, it is not meant that it is not acquired by him, that is, that he is not the author of it, but only that it is not acquired in time.'§ Although a propensity is a subjective ground of determination of the will antecedent to any act, and is, consequently, not an act in the sense of an action which we

* 'The Radical Evil in Human Nature'; Abbot's Trans., 401
† ib., 385. ‡ ib., 386. § ib., 389.

perform in accordance with a maxim, yet it is an act in the sense of adopting the self as maxim into one's will, and this, of course, is the formal source of every act in the other sense, and here is the source of sin. It is an intelligible act only cognizable by reason apart from any condition of time.* Kant insists on this responsibility again and again in terms that cannot be mistaken. 'This disposition', he goes on to say, 'must have been itself adopted by free will, for otherwise it could not be imputed.'† But this is surely arguing the wrong way round! 'Every bad action, when we inquire into its rational origin, must be viewed as if the man had fallen into it directly from the state of innocence. For whatever may have been his previous conduct, and of whatever kind the natural causes impelling him may be, whether, moreover, they are internal or external, his action is still free, and not determined by any cause, and, therefore, it both can and must be always judged as an original exercise of the will.'‡ This is, perhaps, the strongest statement of the case that can be made, and surely the extreme here overleaps itself, for it sweeps away any idea of there being degrees of guilt. Every act of man which falls short of the moral law is, therefore, as guilty as it can possibly be, and the conclusion cannot be escaped that man is not only radically bad, he is diabolically bad. And yet the only justification advanced for such a judgment is that we are accustomed to blame men for their actions. But ought we to? that is the question. Kant fully acknowledges that this perversity of the human heart is universal, but hardly gives any reason why it should be. Wherever the origin of this intelligible, free, and yet universal propensity to badness is sought, it is found to lie beyond our rational discovery. 'Although the corruption of our supreme maxim is our own act, we cannot imagine any further cause for it.'§ It must not be sought in any external object, in any instinct in the

* 'The Radical Evil in Human Nature,' 399. † ib., 389. ‡ ib., 413. § ib., 398.

sensuous part of human nature, or in the corruption of reason, for good and evil are predicable of will, and of will alone*; but in a subordination of the moral law to something less. Yet Kant will not allow that the Church doctrine of Original Sin, which in some respects is similar to all this, is correct, because it would imply that moral qualities could be transmitted by natural generation, which would mean tracing sin to the realm of sense, 'the most unsuitable of all views'. In the nature of things, this origin is indiscoverable, for it is a contradiction to seek for the time-origin of free actions as such. 'The rational origin of this perversion of the will in respect of the way in which it adopts subordinate springs into its maxim as supreme, i.e. the origin of this propensity to evil remains inscrutable to us; for it must itself be imputed to us, and, consequently that ultimate ground of all maxims would again require the assumption of a bad maxim.'† We are, therefore, involved in an infinite regress, without possibility of deciding which came first. 'Thus, then, in our investigation into free actions and the causal power which produced them, we arrive at an intelligible cause, beyond which, however, we cannot go; although we can recognize that it is free, that is, independent of all sensuous conditions, and that in this way it may be the sensuously unconditioned condition of phenomenon. But for what reason the intelligible character generates such and such phenomena, and exhibits such and such an empirical character under certain circumstances, it is beyond the power of our reason to decide.'‡

We have given this lengthy exposition of Kant's system so far as it touches our inquiry, because there is a disposition to regard Kant as the bulwark of the orthodox conception of sin and the vindicator of the conscience. If Kant's system is perfect, then any further inquiry into the origin of sin is a waste of time. But

*'The Radical Evil in Human Nature,' 404-407. † ib., 416.
‡ 'Critique of Pure Reason,' 344.

are we prepared to abide by Kant's position and all it involves? Let us remember its conclusions. We are all absolutely free; man has universally used his freedom so as to subordinate the moral law to self-love; but the reason for his doing this lies absolutely beyond us. Now this contradicts the whole of empirical observation, and especially the trend of current thought; but it is said to support and confirm the judgment of every living conscience.

It would be possible to show that the very basis of Kant's system, his absolute dualism of phenomenon and noumenon, is impossible; it has certainly suffered irreparable damage at the hands of his critics. Into that purely philosophical question it would be irrelevant for us to enter, save to say that the Kantian position seems to reduce the whole of our intellectual life to absolute worthlessness, and our experience of life to illusion. This could never be congenial to any Christian conception of Providence, nor to the Christian interpretation of the meaning and worth of our earthly life. We must beware of purchasing even the freedom of the moral sphere at such a costly price. No such absolute separation between the moral and the intellectual faculties can be admitted. There are other categorical imperatives, which rule the intellectual life. Who is not aware of the imperative which prescribes truth, and truth alone, as the end of the intellectual life? This is as unconditional and authoritative as the moral law, and, indeed, is part of that law. It is more than doubtful, also, whether Kant can escape the scepticism of Pure Reason by way of the consciousness of the moral law. Can we be certain that the consciousness of this moral law is not mingled with theoretic judgments, themselves corrupted by conditions and categories? As enunciated by Kant the analysis of the moral law certainly has a refreshing vigour that makes great appeal, but it is equally certain that the bare consciousness of the moral *ideal* has been expounded by him in accordance with ideas of reason. But even if

Kant has erred here, the point is hardly vital to our discussion. What is of more importance is that Kant assumes the consciousness of the moral law to necessitate the idea of freedom; then that the postulate of freedom proves that man is guilty; and, therefore, that he has a radical evil in his nature. But the argument goes much too fast here, and seems to proceed along mere assumptions. Is it absolutely clear that the consciousness of the moral law needs freedom to account for it? There seems to be no necessity in this deduction. If a man is going to *fulfil* the moral law he must be free to do so; but it is conceivable that he might perceive the moral law and yet be unable to fulfil it. St. Paul seems to have known something of such an experience. But even if it could be shown to be necessary, what is necessity but one of those categories which cannot be applied to anything beyond the realm of space and time! When we proceed from freedom to guilt there we have a repetition of the same process, the validity of which is now even more open to question. This does more than require that *when* a man becomes conscious of the moral law, *then* he is free to perform it; that we believe to be the case, although there is hardly necessity in the assumption; but this further step assumes that, when the man is conscious of a law with which he now sees himself and his past to be in conflict, he is guilty for them both. Now, these deductions have been shown to be true only for empirical matters, so if we are going to allow Kant's idea of guilt to rule at all, it must only be in reference to the *empirical* character; guilt cannot be shown to attach to man as an *intelligible* character. When Kant continually refers to the idea of the imputability of man as one that must regulate all our judgments, he seems to have turned his back altogether on his own principles.

What we miss so entirely in Kant is any appreciation of man as subject to *moral development*. It is said this would have made no difference to his conclusions. 'The absolute distinction upon which Kant based all his

teaching has been blurred and toned down by misapplication of the doctrine of development. But, as Kant himself argued, an absolute distinction is not affected by the fact that it comes slowly to recognition. . . . Kant was ready to admit the possibility of evolution, and to him it did not seem to affect in any way the absolute claims of the moral reason.'* This hardly meets the case. When the consciousness of the absolute character of the moral law is clear, then the fact that this has dawned slowly does not make any difference to its absoluteness; but does it make no difference to the imputation of guilt to a condition which developed during a time when we were not conscious of the law? Surely nothing is more certain than that our consciousness of that law *is* subject to development. If it is consciousness of the practical law that necessitates freedom, then what of those who are not conscious of that law? Are they also free? Is freedom of any value unless we know we are free? But Kant affirms this consciousness of the moral law to be true of all rational beings. But are there not years of childhood, and are there not many adult beings who do not even seem to be rational? These it is supposed are to be excluded; but where is the line to be drawn? Can it be affirmed that the moral law is consciously felt by every one in the same degree, for instance, as it was felt by Kant. (I remember distinctly how much I felt I had gained in clearness of moral consciousness when first I read Kant's definition of its content.) If this consciousness is a matter of development, then freedom also is a matter of dependent degree, and guilt becomes doubly dependent on factors which no human being can apportion for himself or for others.

If this criticism be granted the weight that it carries, then it is unnecessary for us to go on to prove that the conclusions of Kant's system only present us with absolute unintelligibility as its solution of our problem. It is impossible to represent to the mind what Kant means by

* 'Faith and Freedom,' Oman, 188f.

the intelligible sphere that is the cause of all our earthly and temporal experience, or how the two are related, or to comprehend how within this sphere of perfect consciousness of the moral law and perfect ability to keep it, the reversal of the very springs of being should have occurred.

Over against this complete failure of the system to justify itself, there stands, however, the compensation of an unchallengeable position gained for the moral affirmation of our being; and so the judgment of conscience receives a confirmation it cannot otherwise discover. But it is doubtful whether the moral sphere really gains any greater authority by this complete isolation. That the moral has supremacy over the intellectual is the conviction of every moral creature; but it is supremacy of degree, not conflict of spheres. Just as all reasoning rests ultimately on Reason which prescribes immediately unquestionable axioms that cannot be demonstrated, or analysed further, but that are not in conflict with Reason, so the moral affirmations seem to be the rational faculty working at its highest stage, and with the most direct and intuitive processes; to dethrone the moral axioms would inevitably lead to the confusion of the intellectual faculty. The consciousness of the moral law is not irrational, it is the supreme instinct of reason, for it gives balance, order, and proportion to the whole mental life.

It is commonly assumed that the conscience also delivers this charge of 'guilty', to which Kant proceeds from our consciousness of the moral law. We have seen that the *rational* process by which this is arrived at is discounted by Kant's own principles, and we should therefore have to show the conscience has an immediate intuition of guilt. This would be difficult to prove, for the actual content of a judgment of conscience almost defies analysis. On the face of things such a judgment from such a source looks impossible, for the faculty of conscience cannot possibly pronounce on subjects which

have to be decided on intellectual grounds. To infer guilt from conscience is to extend conscience to a region where it is, from the nature of the case, inapplicable. Conscience declares the *oughtness* of our relation to the moral law; it has no power to adjudicate guilt. Those who affirm that it has, bring in surreptitiously matters properly belonging to the conditioned sphere, whereas conscience deals only with the unconditioned. The intrusion is illegitimate on every count. If we confine ourselves, apart from theories, to the judgment of conscience, it is seen to be a judgment that 'we ought always to do what is right'. When we realize that we have failed to do this, then we become conscious of a strange feeling which can only be likened to the physical sensation of pain. It is this feeling that is assumed to be a consciousness of guilt—that is, an immediate and direct verdict that we are guilty; but there cannot be properly any such thing as an immediate consciousness in this case. We are conscious, in the presence of the good, of our evil condition, and if the consciousness of the good is vivid, then we are also conscious of pain. The origin and meaning of this pain is a matter to be investigated later. The assumption that the cause of this pain is our own guilt is one that can never be demonstrated, and it is probably largely due to confusion with theories. This pain is the most devastating sensation in human experience; or, at least, it seems to have the possibility of becoming that, and it is usually taken to be the symptom of our just doom. But if all this were proved then it would remain very doubtful whether there could be for us any deliverance. The crude theories of Atonement which are said to bring immediate relief from this condition of suffering and despair, are open to the dual charge that they have never established any necessary link between the theory and the result claimed to have been produced, and that it is to be questioned whether relief ought to have come in this way. From the conclusion of 'The Radical Badness in Human

Nature' it is clear that when this guilty reversal of nature has taken place, Kant can see no possibility of human deliverance, nor does he outline the principles on which a Divine remedy might operate. What we owe to Kant is a remarkably clear enunciation of the moral law, but he fails to convince us that man's guilt for his failure to attain obedience to that law is of the practically infinite nature that he demands.

If the common dictum that to find an explanation of sin is to excuse it, is to be taken as correct, then our inquiry is doomed to failure. But we can hardly defer our task until we have examined other attempts at explanation. We must, therefore, proceed with our inquiry, bearing in mind those solid gains from Kant: man's consciousness of a moral imperative, and his consciousness that he has not obeyed it.

## Coleridge

In an examination of the writings of Jeremy Taylor on 'Original Sin', S. T. Coleridge is moved to discourse upon this profound subject. He does not, however, bring forth anything more than an English and inferior version of Kant's own ideas, under whose influence he has evidently fallen. He begins by rejecting the ordinary meaning given to 'original sin', which he declares to be nothing more than a pleonastic phrase, for all sin, he says, is original. But this is a misunderstanding of the term, which is technical and really represents the ecclesiastical 'sin of origin'; while in saying that all sin is original, he surely means that all sin is *originated*.* He allows that the origin of sin cannot be found in the Divine will, in any propensity to evil or in nature; since all nature is bound by cause and effect, sin cannot be found therein, but only in 'WILL', 'which is opposed

* 'Aids to Reflection,' New Edition, 1884 (Bell & Sons), 178.

to nature as Spirit', and will 'is a power of originating an act or state'.* 'The ground of *personal* Being is a capacity for acknowledging the Moral Law . . . as that which should, of itself, suffice to determine the Will to a free obedience of the law.'† 'Whatever resists, and, as a positive force, opposes *this* in the Will is therefore evil.'‡ He recognizes the corrupt nature of the Will to be 'the ground, condition, and common ground of all sin',§ but this corrupt *nature* is itself sinful because the corruption must have been self-originated; this was original sin. This simply involves us in an infinite regress from evil nature to Will, which originated the evil nature, and must, therefore, itself be evil, that is, evil by nature, and so *ad infinitum*. He concludes, therefore, that original sin is a mystery, and assumes, in addition, that from the nature of the case it must be so, for it is 'a problem of which every other solution, than the statement of the *Fact* itself, was demonstrably *impossible*'.‖ It is surely begging the question to say that the solution of this problem is impossible from its nature. As the problem is stated here it certainly has that appearance, but this may be due to some of the factors having been given wrong values. If the Will is that which can originate an act, and, presumably, any act, then every act which is a true act of the will is sufficiently explained by its existence. The complication in the problem is, of course, that the Moral Law condemns certain acts of the will as what ought not to have taken place; then what has to be explained is the contradiction between the actual and the ideal. The problem is attacked, in this method, by seeking to account for the actual by means of the ideal; but the recognition of the fact of moral development shows that acts precede the recognition of the ideal Arguing in the opposite direction leaves us with this problem: that the Will is a pure originating force; that the Will *ought* to will the good; and that the Will

* 'Aids to Reflection,' 176. † ib., 190. ‡ ib. § ib., 180 ‖ ib., 189.

universally inclines in the opposite direction. There can be no escape from the contradiction involved in this idea: if the Will wills evil, it must itself be evil. The real conclusion of this is not 'the infinite regress', but that 'Will' is not the sphere in which the origin of sin can be discovered. But this would then destroy the idea of Will as an originating force. Precisely; and this whole type of argument starts from 'will' not as it really is in man, subject to development, but from an imaginary faculty. But where would the recognition of this lead us? Apparently into denying that sin is due to the origination of a human individual. Although Coleridge endeavours to find a ground of sin in the Will, he seems to recognize that the real ground of sin lies beyond our sight altogether. 'This moral evil common to all, must have a common ground in all',* and this must be the 'consequences of Adam's fall', although not 'on account of Adam', nor an evil principle 'inserted or infused into my Will by the will of another—my Will in such case being no *Will*,'† but, because Adam is not an individual but the genus. 'It belongs to the very essence of the doctrine that in respect of original Sin, *every* man is the adequate representative of all men.'‡ Original Sin is therefore 'a timeless act' of 'all human wills collectively'. This is simply the employment, as in the case of Kant's transcendental freedom, of a quite incomprehensible idea; for not only is it impossible to understand what this idea actually means, but if we could comprehend the idea it would yield no help. For if by 'all human wills collectively' we are to think of one Will of humanity which fell, neither 'in time' nor 'out of time', this Will is not the same as that will which we find in individuals in time, and, therefore, it follows that individuals are not responsible for sin, since sin only attaches to the Universal Will. The attempt to make Adam mean the human race is not legitimate exegesis, nor does it yield any solution, for it would only explain the universality

*'Aids to Reflection,' 192. †Ib., 194. ‡Ib., 192

of sin by saying that we all share human nature. But it is the sinfulness of human nature that has to be explained.

In neither Kant nor Coleridge is there any recognition of human nature as subject to development, and we get therefore only abstract discussion, with terms that are incomprehensible. The real conclusion of this method is that individuals in time are not sinners, and the sin of intelligible freedom or of the Universal Will is meaningless.

## Julius Müller

Müller's 'Christian Doctrine of Sin' still remains the last great monograph on this subject, which is remarkable, seeing that it passes, apparently by sound reasoning, from the Kantian position of sin as the free act of the will in disobedience to the moral law, to conclusions that have gained no general acceptance in Theological circles. This could hardly have been otherwise, for these conclusions involve a position so speculative as to lie utterly beyond the reach of comment in one direction or the other, and, moreover, conclusions that seem quite contradictory to the valuation of life accepted and confirmed by the highest Christian experience. The treatise is undoubtedly thorough and exhaustive, but somewhat cumbrous in form and confusing in arrangement, while the method of treatment, ignoring on one hand the transcendentalism of Kant, and failing to satisfy the modern demand for the concrete and the experimental, is altogether too scholastic and abstract. Nevertheless Müller remains to be reckoned with, especially by those who are satisfied with the Kantian position, for they must either remain in the nebulous and unimaginable region of Kant's intelligible world, concerning which nothing more can be said by philosophy or theology, or if they do not feel compelled to accept Müller's hazardous and desperate guess of the extra-temporal origin of sin, show wherein

he is inconclusive, or what other solution remains open when we start out from his position.

The work is chiefly remarkable in that it recognizes that factor of experience so entirely ignored by Kant; moral development as an inescapable condition of human life. This, he shows, is a condition involving at any given moment imperfection in regard to the moral ideal; although this must not be understood as necessitating sin. This fatal conclusion is escaped by distinguishing between 'law' and 'duty'. 'An indefinite use of language includes under the idea of duty all the content of the law',* but in a more exact conception, 'duty is the determinate moral requirement made upon a given individual at a given moment of time.'† But it is questionable whether this point brings any relief from the transcendentalism of the Kantian imperative, for our consciousness of the moral law and of our immediate duty towards it at any one particular moment reveals a sufficiently disquieting divergence. Neither would the recognition of the point apparently aimed at, when expressed in current psychological terminology help us any more, since our developing consciousness of the moral law is always in advance of our moral attainment, and the imperative is still to be at least what we see.

In addition to recognizing development, Müller introduces the idea of degrees of guilt, and here, unlike Kant, refuses to ignore our clear moral perception of those degrees as expressed in the judgment we pass upon the evil acts of others, in obedience to the commands of the Kantian conclusions, which make every sin not only equally guilty, but as guilty as possible. Now, what is it that determines the degree of guilt? There is the magnitude of the sin, but also, and more important for our discussion, the degree of *causation* involved. 'For the completeness of this causation it is requisite that the individual sin be produced by the *will* of the subject, with the *consciousness that it is sin.*'‡ In regard

* 'The Christian Doctrine of Sin.' Müller, Eng. Trans., i. 67.
† ib., i. 68. ‡ ib., 218.

to the latter element he acknowledges that this would only yield information as to the degree of guilt, but would never enable us to decide as to the presence or the non-presence of guilt,* since ignorance and its degree of culpability is so infinite in its variety. But it is to the element of *will* that Müller pays the greatest attention. He reasons at great length, and with some subtlety, on the abstract question of the freedom of the will, without adding anything, however, to the solution of that ancient problem, but concludes with this definite result: that we are subject to a 'successive development in which every moral moment appears as a *mixed result* of *free* self-determination, and *dependence* upon the previously developed'.† This means, of course, that freedom is limited, and in order to confirm 'the consciousness of guilt which imputes every sin to us fully and entirely',‡ 'freedom must clearly have its roots in the origin of the unconditioned'.§ Once this point is gained the inevitable conclusion begins to dawn. For in all our observation of others, and in all introspection no such determined moment, as is here demanded, can be discerned. The conscience is everywhere limited by the result of previous development, and even if we could suppose any moment in moral development in which there was 'perfect equipoise of oppositely determined impulses' we should still have to suppose that the Will could be excluded from the power of its own past decisions, which is not only a Pelagian heresy, but is contrary to all experience. A retreat must therefore be made to the commencing point of the conscious moral development of the individual. In this search only memory can aid us, and although we may recollect some early sensation of tumult in consequence of the intrusion of some evil thought, yet we are compelled to go back to the still earlier emotions, until all trace is lost in 'an unconscious twilight'. Moreover, 'if there were at the very portal of our conscious existence, such an *individual*

* Müller, i. 220. † Ib., ii. 73. ‡ Ib., ii. 77. § Ib., ii. 74.

*sin-fall*, as the stepping forth of the will out of pure indecision to a sinful decision, as a subversion of the course of development, which up to this point had been normal, this dark deed with the nightly shadow in which it envelops our entire life, would form the irremovable background of our memory '.* He goes on to show how unthinkable it is that childhood, the period of greatest weakness, should be weighted with so momentous a decision, for that first decision would give a general direction to every other decision in life. Yet there must have been an original self-decision somewhere, but we must step beyond the bounds of temporal life to discover it, into a region where unconditioned self-determination is possible.† This necessity of stepping beyond the region of the temporal is not to be confounded with Kant's notion that the sphere of the timeless is a ' higher ideal being of the soul ' where things in themselves are contemplated; for this would make the entrance into the empirical world the real fall, and Müller refuses to allow that the categories of space and time are to be derived from evil, as this theory would demand.‡

In any criticism of Müller there are three points to be dealt with. Is his account of the rise of sin in temporal existence correct? If so, is there anything to be gained in stepping into the extra-temporal? Is there any advantage over the more usual explanations?

In Müller's inquiry, the whole aim is to discover a rational ground for the consciousness of guilt. If that is to be explained certain conditions must be met with. It must be shown that sin takes its origin in an undetermined act of will, in the full consciousness that the act is sin. In any act of sin selected the will is already influenced by previous choice. Link by link we may move backward, but finally memory fails and leaves us with a chain in our hands the origin of which we cannot see. But arguing from what we do know we may imagine that there must be a regress of acts growing less and less

* Müller, ii. 77. † ib., ii. 79 f. ‡ ib., ii. 167.

conditioned by previous decisions until we arrive at a choice of evil that was quite unconditioned. This must lie back very early in childhood. There must have been some such choice, therefore, why not ascribe to it the origin of individual sin? Well, if we do, it must carry with it all the consequences that flow from it, and, therefore, to that early sin we must impute the whole guilt of all that follows. This in itself is unthinkable; but having reached this point it fails to satisfy the other conditions: the magnitude of the sin and the clear consciousness of sin. For, judged by the consequences, this first sin is the greatest of all sin; it is an act in which the whole of life's sins are included, and yet, considered as an isolated act, it is probably a sin of the least magnitude; moreover, it is certainly unaccompanied by any proportionate consciousness of its sinfulness. In any act of evil choice that we can remember, there was probably more consciousness of its real character after the choice had issued in action than when the choice was under consideration. There may have been an under-consciousness of uneasiness, a faint monition of danger, which we were foolish to ignore; but what is absolutely certain is that before the choice took place there was no consciousness of the frightful significance of the act, and of all the direful results that were to follow. With these tests the first sin must really be counted the least guilty of all; and in so far as all sin that follows is the result of the first sin, then guilt is reduced to infinitesimal dimensions, if it does not altogether disappear. Moreover, even if we could reach a first act of evil of the smallest possible magnitude accompanied with the smallest possible consciousness of its sinfulness, there still remains no reason why this act should ever have been committed; that is, it is an act without moral significance. And further, our experience of a greater consciousness of sin following an evil choice, suggests that we might be able to go back to some choice concerning which there was no previous consciousness of its sinfulness; and thus we reach a region where acts,

afterwards judged to be evil, and themselves the seed of other acts of even greater evil, are to that stage of consciousness non-moral. Thus evil is shown to be due to the precedence of the non-moral over the moral, and the late dawn of the sin-consciousness. Guilt certainly finds no support in this kind of evidence. But is it all the evidence? Müller really confines himself to the factor of the causality of the will act, and does not apply the factor of the consciousness of sin. Would this have led to any modification of his conclusions? It is surely a fact that for many the sin-consciousness grows with the years, and if the consciousness of sin is a guide to the guilt of sin then we are the guiltier the older we grow. If this holds good generally, both in regard to our own consciousness, and also in regard to the judgment we pass on others, it is also generally true that the old age accompanied by an increasing sensibility concerning sin sees less violent sinning, or, at least, that as the sin-consciousness grows, wilful guilty sin itself diminishes; as the guilt attaching to sin increases, so the sins to which guilt can be attached grow less; this seems to satisfy both the increasing sin-consciousness of the saint and the fact that he is a saint. It seems unlikely, therefore, that Müller would have come to any other conclusions if he had been more interested in this factor.

Are we, then, compelled to step with him into the region of the extra-temporal? Deferring for a moment the necessity for doing this, let us see what would be gained for our discussion by so doing. Would this extraordinary idea throw any light on the origin of sin? Surely if sin takes place in that region of pure, unconditioned self-determination, it is even less comprehensible than if it were an act in time. Since it must be assumed that in that realm sin would have that significance that it has for God, then either the self-determination must have been without ground or reason, pure arbitrariness, and therefore, again, not a moral act at all, or it must have been a choice of sin because sin was sin, and

although for the moment this seems to confirm our consciousness of sin, it indeed shows how far short of the reality that consciousness comes, for in those conditions our act has an utterly diabolical significance; we have sinned as Satan is said to have sinned. And yet again, does not this frightful choice prove that we were evil by nature? So we are back again in the infinite regress. Müller indeed acknowledges that even this speculation yields no new explanation of sin. 'We are obliged to acknowledge that evil . . . since it attains reality by an act of arbitrariness, and the arbitrariness is an abruption from the rational ground and connexion, is according to its essential nature incomprehensible.'* 'Evil is the unfathomable secret of the world; in its inmost depths it ever remains an impenetrable darkness.'† If this is the real conclusion of Müller's work, then why drag in the speculation of an extra-temporal fall, only to show that it is equally incomprehensible? Müller's answer would doubtless be that, although we get no explanation of the origin of sin by this theory, we do find here, and here alone, a complete confirmation of our sense of guilt. But is this even certain? Is not this act which is clearly shown to be irrational, the act of an irrational creature? What greater excuse can we make for sin than to say it is due to a form of insanity! But surely also, we cannot escape the fatal implications of this theory: temporal life is either the punishment decreed by God for our fall, or our choice of temporal life is our fall. The former idea makes the world a vast penitentiary, even if it be not something still worse; an idea contradicted by the life of Jesus and the experience He has made possible for thousands of others: that this life is a great opportunity for doing the will of God, for which we should daily thank Him that we are alive. On the idea that the temporal life is itself the fall, we are faced with the conclusion that the extra-temporal life must be peopled with a multitude who are falling in an ever-increasing number (for is the

* Müller, 'Christian Doctrine of Sin,' ii. 189. † ib.

world not still going on and the birth rate increasing!); that in God's Universe sin is gaining ground.

Now Müller has criticized the doctrine of Original Sin with considerable acumen and success, and we should examine these criticisms, not only to see if they are valid, but to see whether they would not be equally valid when directed against his own theory. He does not take Pelagian ground in his attack, for he agrees that to found sin only in individual actions or omissions is entirely superficial.* Beneath conduct there is that which determines conduct, and there we come across an *abiding root of sin,* and if there were not this root of sin we should have to regard every sin as 'an entirely new and original fall'.† How, then, did man come into this disturbed condition? The awkward fact is, that whenever the moral consciousness awakens, man finds this condition to be already present. 'Sin does not first of all *originate* in him, it only steps forth.'‡ This disposes of any idea that childhood is innocent and that man admits sin into his nature as an alien thing, in some stage of adolescence. For 'if one refers to the freedom of the human will, in which lies the possibility for every one to admit sin into his originally pure inward nature, it must nevertheless be remembered, that, according to the presupposition, there is said to be contained in this freedom, just as much the possibility for each ever to abstain from every contact with sin'.§ There must, therefore, be in every human being an 'innate propensity to evil'; and yet this can only have 'its ground in a free falling away, in one's own offence'.‖ Yet he dismisses the idea of Original Sin as quite valueless to explain this condition; for in the interpretation of the Church this doctrine means that we share the consequences of Adam's sin, and that this consequence is in itself sinful, because it is the occasion of sin. But the notion of sin, as a term only attributable to the self-determination of the individual, is here impos-

* Müller, 'Christian Doctrine of Sin,' ii. 284. † ib., ii. 286. ‡ ib., ii. 290. § ib., ii. 292. ‖ ib., ii. 293.

sible; there can be no guilt attaching to such a direful inheritance, nor even to the actual sins which arise from this condition.* 'Thus the indissoluble connexion of sin and guilt, which by the notion of sin being regarded as fixed should support that of guilt, much rather by the notion of guilt resolving itself, threatens with destruction also that of sin',† and there is nothing in the doctrine which can make the contrary intelligible.‡ Yet he acknowledges that unless we can explain the universality of sin and the consciousness of guilt by some other means, this is a statement nearer to the truth than one that denies either. He makes full acknowledgment of the insistence on racial unity, and the contradiction of atomistic subjectivism which the doctrine retains, but concludes that when the doctrine is taken at its best interpretation, it can give no proof of guilt, and therefore give no explanation of sin. All mediating doctrines of Original Sin, which deny guilt to the hereditary taint and only admit guilt to apply to our free falling away to it, cannot maintain themselves on these lines, for they all, by tracing sin to freedom within these limits, fail to explain its universality, and they are condemned by the conscience which charges us with guilt for our own actual sins and for the ground from which they arise. This failure of the traditional doctrine to justify itself presses the author back again to his idea of 'an extra-temporal mode of existence of created personalities' in which sin took place, and upon which our life in time is dependent.§ But we have already seen that this idea does not confirm the sense of guilt, so that Müller's investigation only results in a destruction of all theories so far advanced. Modern inquiry has suggested that man, so far from having fallen from a higher condition, is really rising from a lower plane of existence. We shall have to see later whether this would throw any light on the problem, or whether it would evacuate the notion of sin, by making it a necessity; but before we do that we must investigate

* Müller, ii. 340. † ib., 341. ‡ ib. § ib., ii. 400.

those theories which apart from this theory of man's origin, have boldly claimed sin to be a necessity.

Meanwhile it should be noted that Müller's investigations really move about one point, namely, an effort to confirm the sense of guilt. It is possible that his real conclusion is a failure to discover such confirmation. Can, therefore, the consciousness of guilt dispense with confirmation or exist in face of contradiction from so many quarters? To answer that we should have to undertake an analysis of this consciousness and an inquiry into its origin, a task that has not yet been sufficiently attempted. It should be noted also that while with Kant guilt is a deduction from the consciousness of the moral law, in Müller this guilt-sense is the regulative conception, and yet it is assumed to exist and mean a certain thing, without any very searching examination. That, therefore, we must bear in mind to attempt later.

# II

# Theories which regard Sin as a Necessity

In revolt from the incomprehensible or unconfirmable speculative position which seems to be the inevitable conclusion gained by making the free human will the originator of sin, the subject has been approached from a diametrically opposed standpoint, and has started with the idea of sin as a necessity grounded in the nature of things or in human nature as such. Such a course is congenial to the modern scientific spirit, with its strong leaning to determinism; satisfies the logical necessity of thought in that it finds an entirely comprehensible ground of sin in conditions that make its emergence certain; and explains very satisfactorily the universality of human sin. But, on the other hand, it is open to the disqualification that it really destroys the very notion of sin, as that which ought not to be, takes away all possibility of imputing the guilt of sin to the human agent, and stands in direct opposition to one of the fundamental facts of the religious consciousness, in that it must either deny the existence of sin altogether or lay the entire blame of sin on God Himself. Nevertheless, we should not be prohibited from examining such theories because of the objection that appears to invalidate the point from which they set out; for the starting-point of the free human will, by its very notion, seems to be equally doomed to failure; but bearing in mind the apparent conflict between intellectual comprehensibility, empirical necessity, and the religious notion of God and the consciousness of sin, see whether

the former is convincing within its own area, and then determine whether the religious consciousness maintains its verdict intact, and so be content to rest in a dualism, deny one verdict in the presence of the other, or endeavour to resolve them in some higher point of view.

If sin is a necessity to human nature as constituted, then there seems nothing to prevent us from ascribing sin to the act of God in so constituting human nature. The only way of escaping from this hardly to be contemplated conception is to show that there is a necessity with God Himself which determined that human nature must come into existence, and come into existence in a certain way. But in thus falling short of the impiety of ascribing sin to the *Will* of God, it falls into the necessity of denying omnipotence to the Will of God, that is, of altering the very notion of God. A necessity in human nature is the line of solution sought by Hegel; the line of a necessity in God is daringly attempted by Schelling and Weisse.

## Schelling

Starting out originally from the position of Kant, Schelling eventually abandons it for dogmatism. He assumes the Absolute to be the indifference of subjective and objective, and, indeed, of all contrasts, and then attempts to derive differentiated being from the unity of Absolute identity. This predicateless abstraction can be the cause of nothing at all, and, later, he attempts to make the Absolute a more fruitful source by filling in the conception in accordance with theosophical mythology. His later ideas are outlined in his 'Philosophical Investigations on the Nature of Human Freedom, and subjects connected therewith'. The ideas put forward are speculative to the last degree, and really admit of no confirmation, nor do they seem to have any other necessity to thought than as a refuge of despair. The system takes

its rise from the contrasts of experience; in all personality we find two principles, such as ego and non-ego. Now, neither of these can be the Absolute, since they are interdependent, yet they are both essential to personality which depends upon a combination of a self-contained principle and an independent Basis; therefore, the Personal God is not Absolute. Moreover, the indifference of these opposites is not God's Being as essentially existing, but its ground or source. This ground or nature is blind, unreasoning instinct, in Him, indeed, eternally merged in love, for in Him the principles are unresolved; but it is from this dark Basis in God that all beings spring, and as such possess an individual will independent of the Universal Will. These contrasting principles are also found in man, but in him they are separable; for if it were not so man would not be in any way different from God, and revelation would be impossible. It is in the separability of the principles that there is found the *possibility* of moral evil. The *actual existence* of evil arises, however, not merely from the separability of the principles but from 'a *positive perversion* of the principles, in which egoity separates itself from the intelligent principle, and elevates itself above it'. Nevertheless, despite this origin of man, Schelling insists that man is free. In so far as freedom means ability to do evil, it must have its root independently of God, that is, in that ground which is in God, inseparable indeed, but nevertheless distinct from Him. From this ground man rises by an act of will which 'does not precede life even according to time, but passes through time untouched and uninfluenced by it, as an act which according to its nature is eternal'. This free act precedes consciousness and indeed makes it.

Now it is impossible to allow that man's freedom is really maintained in these conditions, or to agree with Schelling that his being is his own act and therefore his choice and guilt. Nothing can be clearer to science and experience than that man's existence is not his own act.

No act which precedes consciousness is an act of man. He is traceable to the movement of the 'Ground', and since Schelling links by absolute necessity all our temporal being to this so-called act, freedom in any real sense vanishes entirely. Is there any more help in Schelling's idea of God? It is difficult to gather from Schelling's work whether he conceives the Basis to be something that precedes God, or something that is discernible in Him which is not Himself. The pregnant hint of evolution has been applied so widely to the solution of all problems of existence, that it is no wonder that the paradox of the evolution of the Absolute has been entertained: the idea that God is subject to development. Some shadow of this is seen in the tendency apparent in many quarters to deny omnipotence to God as an explanation of the existence of evil. There may be something to be said for this conception, but surely there can be nothing said for the explanation of the emergence of the essentially existing God from a blind, unconscious will-to-be. How could this Basis originate differences afterwards to be reconciled in a unity greater than itself? That the greater cannot come from the less is surely a necessity of thought that evolution has done nothing to prove unsound. Moreover, how is it that from this Basis there have come such different results in man and in God? To say that the results had to be different so that revelation could be possible, is to make a condition, in itself not necessary, the necessary cause of other conditions; which is arguing from that which itself needs explanation. If God be still in progress towards some Absolute goal, how then are we to account for the conception of perfection, infinity, and eternity that accompany all our thinking, and by no means to be derived from our imperfection, finitude, and temporality, since we could have no consciousness of these unless we had in some degree passed beyond them. On these lines the religious consciousness would be shown to be an illusion, but even an illusion needs accounting for. It gives us no assurance

that the goal ever will be reached, dooms all our aspirations to uncertainty, and invalidates all thinking, to imagine that the real origin of things is in the unconscious chaos which preceded God. If a dualism within God, rather than a process is intended, since in Him the dualism is said to be overcome by the eternal merging of the ground in love, it becomes a curious question how the philosopher has been able to perceive the existence of that invisible, obliterated, and transcended principle. There is an initial confusion between logical and real being here. The speculation is unnecessary and unconfirmable, and the point attained by such uncertain method yields no explanation of the facts that are supposed to require such ideas. The regressive process may have the appearance of necessity, but it is discounted by the fact that the initial point being reached there is no necessity in a reversal of the process back to the results. We reach an origin which fails to explain the result. Above all, the crude theosophizing is entirely uncongenial to the Christian way of thinking of God.*

## Weisse

It will be convenient to notice here the theory of Weisse, who, although he comes after Hegel, and at first was one of his disciples, eventually broke away from logical idealism, and adopted ideas that have a great resemblance to Schelling's later theosophy.

Weisse, like Schelling, seeks something beyond the Personal God. The Divine Reason in which the whole is intelligible is not the whole nature of the Deity, so much as the primitive possibility of all Being. Besides this primitive Reason we must have the Divine Heart which conceives the images of things, and also the Divine

* See Pfleiderer's 'Development of Theology,' 62-7, and Müller's 'Christian Doctrine of Sin,' ii. 103-22.

Will which freely works upon them, and so begets the nature of God as personality and love. The self-realization of God is a process in time, preceding the creation of the world. Matter is formed by the Divine will working on the Divine heart—an actualization of the non-ego of God. From the creation of matter, thus conceived, comes the metaphysical necessity of Evil, for though generated by God it is an antithesis to His Eternal Will, and possesses a distinct spontaneity of creative existence, which passes into a real antagonism to the blessedness of God. This antagonism God cannot immediately end. The origination of sin in the creature is, therefore, not to be sought in a conscious act, but is a genesis before time of the personal will out of the natural spontaneity of individual beings.*

Weisse does not repeat Schelling's fruitless endeavours to find a place for human freedom in this scheme, but there is presented to us here no more logical or other necessity of seeking something prior to the Personal God, the ground both of Himself and His contradiction. If God is not the beginning, He is also not the end, and He can never be the God that our hearts seek. In all recession of thought we must move back to a sufficient ground of existence, but this void of indeterminate, impersonal Being can be the ground of nothing. The cause of these speculations is, of course, rooted in a conception of the Divine Personality, which imagines that God needs a not-self in order to know Himself. This may be a condition in which human self-consciousness comes to be, but it is not an essential condition of self-consciousness as such, and need not, therefore, be attributed to the Absolute Consciousness.

So far as we have gone, therefore, we must abandon all idea of sin being traced to a necessary origin in something prior to God, since there can be no necessity outside of, or prior to, God Himself. Is there any necessity for sin in Himself, or in His creation? To admit that such

* Pfleiderer, 'Development of Theology,' 145-7.

a necessity is in Himself, is to admit that God contains within Himself His own contradiction and antagonism, and this means that we have not really reached God at all. The source of these ideas is to be traced to a theosophy which has been founded on a quite discredited faculty-psychology.

We turn, therefore, to Hegel, who has exerted in the past such a tremendous influence on Theology, and see how this question is understood by him, and what solution he proposes.

## Hegel

Hegel's doctrine of sin is only to be gathered from scattered passages of his writings, and is complicated by the various points of view from which the subject is in turn regarded, so that it is sometimes difficult to be sure that justice is being done him in exposition. There would seem to be some confusion between dialectical and empirical demonstration, between Man as the human race and the applicability of the notion of man to any individual, between the ideal facts and the facts as they emerge for human consciousness; and to add to these difficulties the subject is discussed within an arbitrary scheme adopted from theological systems, and occasionally we meet with what look like concessions to theological sensitiveness, which seem only to introduce irreconcilable contradiction. But in general there emerges clearly enough the distinct recognition that sin is a necessity to man as a developing creature, and with this as centre a system can be constructed which deserves earnest consideration.

Sin is affirmed first of all to be a dialectical necessity which can be expressed in the usual form of a Triad, Thesis, Antithesis, and Synthesis, represented by Innocence, Sin, and Virtue. But while the strictly dialectical method is taken to be demonstrable *a priori*, and its

metaphysical necessity deduced from its dialectical necessity in accordance with the principle: 'the rational is the real, and the real is the rational', in this case empirical elements enter in, and therefore the proof of the theory lies in its applicability to empirical facts. Moreover, this Triad differs from the Triads of the Logic in that it represents a process in time, and consequently the lower members of the Triad are not to be treated merely as 'moments of the higher term which transcends them'.* The triad is to be applied to the race rather than the individual, and it is to be taken to explain Sin rather than Virtue, for there are other ways to Virtue besides Sin; but there is no other way from *Innocence* to Virtue.

The necessity of sin is found, therefore, in the fact that man commences with innocence. Sin is due to the progressive nature of man. 'To say that man is by nature good amounts substantially to saying that he is potentially Spirit', and therefore only potentially good; but 'it is just in the very fact that Man is only potentially good that the defect of his nature lies',† for he 'must be actually, for himself, what he potentially is, his potential being must come to be for him actual'.‡ But why should this process result in sin? Hegel's answer appears to contain material for two solutions. They are found side by side in his exposition of the nature of man, and show on the one hand, that the process of coming to consciousness necessitates evil, and on the other hand, that it is consciousness that reveals the evil. It would be best for our purpose to keep these two sides separate, at least in our first inquiry. It is first of all laid down that in progressing from a lower to a higher condition man must pass through a state of separation. 'It is this passing beyond his natural state, his potential Being, which first of all forms the basis of the division or disunion, and in connexion with which the disunion directly arises.'§ This separation is moreover an essential condition of con-

* 'The Hegelian Cosmology,' McTaggart, 152. † 'The Philosophy of Religion,' Eng. Trans., 1895, iii. 46. ‡ ib., 47. § ib.

sciousness, without which of course it cannot be. 'Man is consciousness, and is consequently essentially differentiation',* for consciousness is only attained by inner contrast. 'It is in this disunion that independent Being or Being-for-self originates, and it is in it that evil has its seat; here is the source of the evil.'† 'Evil is first present in the sphere of knowledge; it is the consciousness of an independent Being, or Being-for-self relatively to an Other, but also relatively to an Object which is inherently universal in the sense that it is the Notion or rational will. It is only by reason of this separation that I exist independently, for myself, and it is in this that the evil lies. To be evil means, in an abstract sense, to isolate myself; the isolation which separates me from the universal represents the element of rationality, the laws, the essential characteristics of Spirit. But it is along with this separation that Being-for-self originates, and it is only when it appears that we have the Spiritual as something universal as Law, as what ought to be.'‡ What this seems to imply, in more popular language, is that existence as a conscious self is impossible without a revolt from the universal Self; to exist as a self, therefore, means to be evil: you cannot be a self without being selfish. Now although there is much that seems to support this from observation of human development, it cannot be strictly true, from one consideration, namely, that in the reconciliation, or synthesis which takes place in religion, there is no denial of self-hood, no loss of self-consciousness, no merging of the self-conscious being in an Other, in order to attain perfect union. In the depths of communion with God the distinction between man and God is not obliterated, but remains, not as any obstruction to the highest ethical union, but as its very ground of possibility: they must be separate as Selves that they may be One in ethical purpose. The Self, as a Notion, contains no necessity of being in ethical contrast to the Universal. But of course this, while freeing us from the

* 'Philosophy of Religion,' iii. 49. † ib., 53. ‡ ib.

objectionable confusion between psychological and ethical unity, hardly answers the still remaining question, whether that which is not a real conscious self can ever become such without an affirmation of self as complete end of being, which would be selfish and evil. If, however, it be affirmed that this is a necessary movement in progress towards a higher end, then it cannot be called evil or sin. How then has this condition come to be so universally regarded as evil? This brings us to the other side of the explanation: that of evil as revealed to consciousness. Hegel expresses this in the following way: 'When man is only as he is according to Nature, he is evil.'* This judgment is said to be delivered from a higher standpoint than that which says that man is by nature good, namely, from the standpoint of reflection. 'It is only in accordance with this knowledge he comes to be regarded as evil, so that this reflection is a sort of external demand or condition implying that if he were not to reflect upon himself in this way the other characteristic, namely, that he is evil, would drop away.'† 'As a matter of fact it is knowledge which is the source of all evil, for knowledge or consciousness is just that act by which separation, the negative element, judgment, division in the more specific form of independent existence or Being-for-itself in general, comes into existence. Man's nature is not as it ought to be; it is knowledge which reveals this to him, and brings to light that condition of Being in which he ought not to be.'‡ 'It is therefore not the case that reflection stands in an external relation to evil, but, on the contrary, reflection itself is evil.'§ Now there is surely confusion here. To know oneself to be evil is surely a far higher stage than to be evil and not to know it. Hegel might reply that man is not evil until he knows himself as such; but even that does not prove that the knowledge by which evil comes to be known is itself evil, for that knowledge means also

* 'The Philosophy of Religion,' iii. 48 † ib., 51, 52. ‡ ib., 52. § ib., 53.

the knowledge of good, since evil is not recognizable as evil apart from opposition to the good. Knowledge is, strictly speaking, incapable of moral qualification. We have now had it stated that Innocence, man's natural condition, is evil, that the condition of revolt into being-for-self is evil, and now that the knowledge or reflection by which he knows this is evil. Not only is existence as a self evil, but reflection, the turning back of thought upon itself is evil. The two first stages are known to be evil only through the last stage of reflection; but to call this evil because it reveals evil is to confound logical with ethical distinction, and it is just here that logical idealism fails to present us with a convincing scheme.

Yet, despite this confusion and the impossible conclusion that is reached, there is something in Hegel that is of profound importance for our inquiry. There is evidently some difficulty in moving from Innocence to Virtue without encountering Sin. Is there necessity? From the standpoint of logical idealism there seems to be no rational necessity for sin, for we find it not to be involved in the idea of the Self, since in reconciliation the self is not destroyed; and Hegel's willingness to recognize the empirical element here is significant. Does that factor open up any better solution? Man as racial, if evolution is true, but certainly Man as individual, commences in a state of nature, and then develops a consciousness which condemns the state thus discovered, as evil. But nature, so long as it is nature, is certainly not evil. Is the judgment of the consciousness, therefore, to be rejected? To do so would be to acquiesce in a state of nature, and this is universally regarded as not only evil, but sinful, since it denies that in man which constitutes him man, and thus effectually destroys all possibility of progress. Therefore, we must abide by the judgment of the consciousness. But is that *evil* thus discovered under the dawn of consciousness, man's sin and guilt? Reason seems to say, 'no'; religion seems to say, 'yes'. The answer of religion will be investigated later; let us confine

ourselves for the present to the answer of reason. Let us suppose that the condition discovered is really innocent. How shall we get from the innocence of nature to a reconciliation with the demand made in conscience, that is, how shall we become virtuous or good? Hegel's answer is that we must pass through Sin to reach Virtue; he evidently means 'sin' and not mere 'evil' which is his usual term. 'Man must be culpable; in so far as he is good he must not be good as any natural thing is good, but his guilt, his will, must come into play; it must be possible to impute moral acts to him. Guilt really means the possibility of imputation. The good man is good along with and by means of his will, and to that extent because of his guilt.'* It seems impossible that guilt bears here its ordinary meaning; it looks as if Hegel could say that a man was guilty of being good; that is, it simply means that man's act is his own. Hegel does not seem to mean that man must merely come to recognize his natural innocence to be evil, and to leave it for goodness by the choice of his will; but he *must* go on to Sin, or, to be more correct, and the difference may mean much, he must pass through what is called Sin. Let us examine this more carefully. The process might be conceived of as follows: a man emerges from innocence under the light of consciousness, and sees before him both evil and good. Why *must* he choose evil? If it is because his nature is evil, then he is not guilty for his nature, at least, not at this point. If his action is arbitrary, it is not really an act of will. 'This arbitrary will is not will. It is will only in so far as it comes to a resolution, for in so far as it wills this or that it is not will.'† Then why should he not will the good, which man is conscious that he does not will? This evidently cannot be the process as conceived by Hegelianism. It must be that evil and good are not present in this way to consciousness when it awakens, but that man chooses evil because he can only know that evil is evil by actual trial, and his dis-

* 'Philosophy of Religion,' iii. 48. † Ib., 50.

covery that it is evil will eventually lead him to the good —to Virtue. For after Sin there must follow Retribution or suffering, and on that Amendment, and so to Virtue; for we can discern this other Triad between Sin and Virtue.* Therefore, sin is a necessary experiment, and has a necessary result. 'It follows in the long run sin must always disgust the person who commits it. You have only to go on sinning long enough to have it borne in on you with an ever increasing force that it is not in this way that self-satisfaction is to be found. . . . And so experience will bring home to it (i.e. the self) inevitably that it cannot find satisfaction in sin.'† It is evident, therefore, that sin is a choice based upon a mistaken notion of the Self: sin is ignorance. But is it, therefore, sin in the theological sense? 'Sin is for Hegel so much less real than man, that it is impossible for man ever to regard himself as altogether sinful. Sin is a mere appearance. Like all appearance, it is based on reality. But the reality it is based on is not sin. Like all reality it is perfectly good. The sinfulness is part of the appearance.'‡ Now, if Hegel has not proved the necessity of sin on logical grounds, what are we to say of this empirical account? Sin is here shown to be due to man's progress from moral ignorance to moral knowledge. But that means that sin in the theological sense of the term is non-existent. The dictum that if sin is necessary it is not sin is clearly shown to be true on these lines.

This conclusion, it should be noted, is not reached from the purely philosophical standpoint, but only by admixture with the empirical. There is only one thing wrong with this argument, namely, its conflict with the religious consciousness; and yet so far as we have proceeded the religious consciousness has not found any justification in philosophy. The opposition to morality looks equally contradictory and dangerous. McTaggart has undertaken to defend the theory from this charge.§

* 'The Hegelian Cosmology,' 151. † Ib., 162, 3. ‡ Ib., 244. § Ib., 172-4.

He claims that even if it 'were detrimental to ordinary morality it should not therefore be rejected'. But it is not, because the theory only has to do with a condition when we are in such a state of rudimentary innocence that we can only advance by negation, and when sin is indispensable to the gaining of virtue; but we can never know whether we are in this condition or not, and therefore whether virtue could not be gained by the other way of resisting the temptation to sin; moreover, sin is always to be followed by retribution and amendment before it becomes virtue, which is a sufficient deterrent. McTaggart maintains that 'all that is required of a theory of Sin, therefore, in order that it may be harmless to morality, is that it should not deny the difference between Virtue and Sin, or assert that Sin is the greater good of the two. Hegel's theory does not do either. To go further, and to condemn sin as absolutely and positively bad is useless to morality and fatal to religion.'*

There is certainly a great difference between the way in which sin is regarded in this theory and the dreadful aspect it wears in the judgment of religion and theology. Whether Christianity could exist with such a theory as Hegelianism offers remains to be seen, for of course it is conceivable that Christianity is independent of all theories; and since Christianity offers itself as a complete remedy for sin, in that sense it also does not regard sin as absolute as, for instance, goodness. What Hegelianism does contribute is the recognition that whatever the reality of evil be, it is a reality of which man only becomes conscious through the growth of knowledge, and that evidently a knowledge of the good. For philosophy it may be true, that things are what they are for perfect knowledge, but the task of religion is to bring men to the knowledge of God and the good, which is something demanding a psychological rather than a philosophical outlook. While Hegel can sound a note of infinite sorrow at the recognition of evil, it should be noticed

* 'The Hegelian Cosmology,' 174.

that he fails to establish man's complicity in this evil, and so fails to confirm the sense of sin in its usual interpretation. The suggestion that sin has its root in selfishness, in affirming the individual self to be the end of being is one that has had a very deep influence on modern theology; but the Hegelian corollary that this is a mistake due to ignorance of the nature of the self is one that has not been widely received.

Meanwhile between the two poles of Freedom and Necessity all philosophical theories seem bound to wander, without discovering a solution entirely satisfactory. If freedom be the essential condition necessary to confirm man's sense of sin, it seems difficult to discover such freedom within the temporal realm, or to understand how from that starting point, even if it could be discovered, sin would be universal. If necessity be sought as that which is needed to explain the universality of sin, it is difficult then to understand the rise of fear, remorse, and penitence, and impossible to maintain the guilt of sin, whence the notion of sin vanishes altogether. There is naturally, therefore, in our own day a great impatience with all philosophical reasoning on this as well as on other matters, and we turn therefore to examine those theories which endeavour to escape the metaphysical difficulties by making the sense of sin a purely religious phenomenon, to be interpreted within the bounds of religion alone.

# III

# Theories which seek to explain Sin by confining it within the bounds of Religion

## Schleiermacher

THE importance of Schleiermacher for theology is to be found in the method by which he sought to discover the truth of Christian experience, by isolating religion both from knowledge and morality, and by placing it in a position superior to both. Until his time theology had been built up from objective ideas of Sin and Redemption, as they were interpretated from authoritative pronouncements of Scripture, these interpretations being, however, influenced not so much by the original meaning of the Scriptures as by various philosophical and intellectual considerations then current. In accordance with his general method Schleiermacher sought to explore the 'general objective estate of sin' with light obtained from the subjective consciousness of the Christian. The importance and fruitfulness of this method lies, of course, in the recognition of the necessity for examining the faculty which makes a judgment, or experiences a feeling; and whether theology is content to rest in this isolation or not, it must in the future start from this position. It will remain to be seen what light this method throws on the subject we are investigating, and whether we can be content to abide by the deliverance of the subjective con-

sciousness, or still have to proceed to the problem of the reality beyond our consciousness.

We are not called upon to do more than simply note the fact, that Schleiermacher attempted to reconcile his views with traditional theology. He claims to believe in the Doctrine of Original Sin: 'in all men actual sin is the outcome of Original Sin'*; it is the complete incapability for goodness, limited only by the possibility of redemption.† It arose, however, in Adam from the very conditions of human nature, and itself effected no change in human nature. The first sin is only the appearance of sinfulness, and is only what might have been expected. But can Schleiermacher mean by this outcome of human nature that inherited sin for which Church theology has charged every individual with guilt? We do indeed inherit this human nature from Adam, but that is our calamity not our guilt, and indeed when he comes to the question of individual guilt, he confesses that the doctrinal statements on this head 'are by no means to be understood as expressions of the personal self-consciousness'. 'Guilt, it is to be called with perfect accuracy, only if it is regarded simply as a joint deed of the whole race, for it cannot be the guilt of the individual, at least so far as it is produced in him.' 'Sin is in all points a thing of Society.' 'It is in each the work of all, and in all the work of each.'‡ Whatever these abstractions may mean, it is not for the sin of the whole race that any man feels guilty, but for the part which he has taken in it. Schleiermacher indeed only treats Original Sin as a name for the universal sense of the need of redemption. We turn gladly from these sophistical attempts at reconciliation with traditional views, to his more unfettered statements.

Of the first importance is his insistence on the relativity of the consciousness of sin. 'We have the consciousness of sin, as often as accompanying a frame of mind, or approaching us in any way, a God-consciousness determines our own self-consciousness as *Unlust*.'§ The

* 'Der Christliche Glaube,' S. 73. † ib., S. 70. ‡ ib., S. 71, 2. § ib., S. 66.

sense of sin seems more universal than the sense of God, and according to the foregoing the sense of sin would only be found within the Christian religion. There is, however, a potential God-consciousness which is universal, for consciousness of sin *always* presupposes a consciousness of the Good. But does this God-consciousness reveal what is only relative to it, and, therefore, unreal in itself? Not so. It reveals an 'impediment to the determining force of the Spirit which is caused by the independence of the sentient functions. It is the positive struggle of the flesh against the Spirit.'* Then what is the origin of this contradiction in man? It is to be found in the history of the race as one of progress. 'We are conscious of Sin as the power and works of a time in which the leaning towards the God-consciousness had not yet sprung up in us.'† 'It has its natural rise in the priority of man's sensual development to his spiritual development, and of his intellectual development to his power of will.'‡ But surely no one else than God Himself is responsible for this late rise of the God-consciousness! How, then, can we deny God to be the author of sin? 'As Sin and Grace are opposed to each other in our self-consciousness, God cannot be considered in the same way the Author of Sin, as He is the Author of Salvation. As, therefore, we never have a consciousness of Grace without a consciousness of guilt, we must also declare that the existence of sin is ordained for us by God, with and by the side of Grace.'§ But this position cannot be defended from its inferences: we interpret our consciousness as due to sin, but God does not, although God has so caused us to interpret it in order that we may feel our need for Redemption. It is, in short, a pious fiction which the theologian has now discovered. Schleiermacher will not allow, however, that the need of redemption is caused by the consciousness that we have deserved punishment, for that would make the longing for redemp-

* 'Der Christliche Glaube,' S. 67. † S. 67. ‡ Pfleiderer, 'Development of Theology,' 114. § 'Der Christliche Glaube,' S. 80.

tion a desire to escape only the consequences of sin, and not sin itself as an impediment to the God-consciousness.* But all this plainly denies guilt, and there is nothing to hinder the logical inference that for God, sin is non-existent.

With Schleiermacher, then, we gain a new method of approaching our subject which no theology can neglect in the future, namely, that before we can investigate sin, we must investigate the faculty that reveals it. According to Schleiermacher, however, this fruitful acknowledgment ends in a conception of sin which is indistinguishable from a denial of the reality of sin. Beginning with a desire to do justice to the Christian consciousness, he ends by denying its pronouncements. We are compelled to ask on what grounds? On the ground of a Spinozistic idea of God which makes man, together with his sin, entirely dependent on Him. In order to escape attributing sin to God as its Author, he has to say that in the eyes of God sin is not. Is this the inevitable conclusion of this method? Has the Christian consciousness been correctly analysed from the start? The Christian consciousness feels the contradiction revealed by the God-consciousness, but Schleiermacher interprets this to be due to the predominance of sense affections over the Spirit. To this Pfleiderer objects: 'a true analysis of the moral consciousness, uninfluenced by philosophical prepossessions will always discern in evil a conflict of the selfish individual will with the obligation of the law of the whole, and therein a self-contradiction within the mind itself, not merely a contradiction between mind and sense'.† This is true, but how is the contradiction which is wholly within the realm of the spirit to be accounted for? If the individual will acts for itself when it ought not, then we are back at the Kantian position, which we found involved arbitrariness and unintelligibility. Now it is a question for psychology whether the will does not, at the

* 'Der Christliche Glaube,' S. 71-4. † Pfleiderer, 'Development of Theology,' 114.

first, prescribe itself as an all-sufficient end, and only later through experiences of life, or through religious awakening, arrive at a consciousness of the greater whole, or of the existence of the will of God, in the presence of which we stand discovered to be directed towards a wrong end. The question, then, remains, whether the will of man was originally set in isolation in order that in the process of consciousness it might discover its true end and willingly unite with the same; whether this original isolation accounts for the perversion of the will, discovered in the light of further revelation; and whether this does not leave us with the dilemma of either admitting that the self-willing is not sinful, or that God has prescribed this course, and is, therefore, the Author of sin. These alternatives must be borne in mind in future examination.

Ritschl criticizes Schleiermacher, because the psychological scheme in which the consciousness of sin is set is not in accord with the notion of the Christian religion adopted by Schleiermacher himself, namely, that the God consciousness peculiar to the Christian religion has for its characteristic mark, 'that a prevailing reference to the moral task constitutes the fundamental feature of the pious disposition'.* That prescribed task is nothing less than the realization of the Kingdom of God. Ritschl goes on to point out that 'the conception of sin as the predominance of the flesh over the spirit always depends upon the fact that the spirit life is not covered by the laws of mechanism, but that it is accompanied by the consciousness of freedom. But who in attentively reading Schleiermacher's treatise can suppress the thought that the mechanical impediment of the spirit by the flesh is conceived as sin, only because the spirit knows that this ought not to find place?'† Ritschl therefore thinks that, at this point, Kant has rendered greater service to our doctrine than Schleiermacher. This criticism may be right, but since our task is gradually narrowing down to

* Ritschl, 'A critical history of Justification and Reconciliation,' Eng. Trans., 453. † ib., 455.

final issues we must ask what would happen along Schleiermacher's method of approach if this teleological 'ought not' had been more explicitly acknowledged by him. Is not this little phrase hiding some discussion that needs to be undertaken before it can be used as an all-sufficient test of our conceptions? The ought not of the conscience is simply a moral judgment, and must not be taken without further examination to be a criterion of metaphysical truth. Whether we can allow the 'ought not' of the moral judgment and the certainly 'is' of the metaphysical judgment to stand in contradiction, or allow the one to silence the other, or whether we should attempt to reconcile them in some higher point of view are questions still remaining to be solved.

What might well be undertaken by any serious student of the problem is an attempt to discover whether the method of Schleiermacher, with the criticisms which have been passed upon its practical application by Ritschl and Pfleiderer, can be used to take us any nearer to a solution. Ritschl has largely adopted this method of proceeding from the Christian consciousness, and we shall now turn to examine the results which he obtains.

## Ritschl

In agreement with Schleiermacher, Ritschl starts out from the Christian consciousness in order to investigate sin, on the ground that sin is wholly a religious idea; but with his greater freedom from traditional theology, he is able to apply the method with greater rigour. What sin is can only be known under the experience of the Christian redemption; sin is 'the negative presupposition of reconciliation'.* 'The Gospel of the forgiveness of sins is actually the ground of the knowledge of our sinfulness.'† He acknowledges, of course, that all men are familiar with the fact of sin even apart from

* 'Justification and Reconciliation,' Eng. Trans. 327. † ib.

Christianity, but he maintains that the real nature, compass, and worthlessness of sin, are to be seen only in the light of Christ's revelation. 'A given action, in the light of human society, and the law of the State, is a wrong and a crime. But the same action is sin when it springs from indifference towards God.'* Sin is therefore entirely a religious idea. He warns us that we must not go beyond experience to frame any general concept of sin, since sin is a fact realized only in experience. As with Schleiermacher, 'the idea of sin can only be formed by comparison with an idea of the good'†; and since the highest good is the Kingdom of God, sin can only be understood in its deepest sense as the antinomy of this.‡ This opposite to the Kingdom of God is not to be found in Original Sin, which Ritschl criticizes acutely and rejects by the application of his own method; for the doctrine cannot be tested by Christian experience, and indeed is excluded by it, since it is *actual* sin that we are conscious of being forgiven in the Christian reconciliation; instead of explaining the sense of guilt, it really denies guilt to be possible, since it traces individual action to an inborn inheritance; it denies education to be efficacious; it destroys the indispensable practical necessity of assuming degrees of evil in individuals; and it makes the original state in which sin is supposed to have arisen one of moral perfection, and therefore does injustice to the Scriptural representation, and makes sin in such a state only the more improbable. The only value of the doctrine, according to Ritschl, is that in its idea of the original state of man, it gives symbolical expression to the truth that the Christian ideal of man falls within the limits of human constitution.

Prompted by Schleiermacher's idea of 'common sin', and doubtless feeling the need of going deeper than Pelagian atomism, Ritschl thinks of the vast complexity of sinful action as a 'kingdom of sin',§ which he proposes as 'a substitute for the hypothesis of Original Sin,

* 'Justification and Reconciliation,' 334. † ib., 329. ‡ ib. § ib., 338.

and which gives due prominence to everything that the notion of Original Sin was rightly enough meant to embrace'.* What we are to conceive by this idea appears, however, to be nothing more than a recognition of the evil example and influence of all sinful action, and the general lowering of the moral judgment that is engendered by the universal practice of sin; but this even Pelagianism recognized. How this idea of a federation of sin is to take the place of the doctrine of Original Sin is not clear; for that doctrine did attempt to derive all sin from an origin, however difficult it may be to conceive such an origin; however little the doctrine has done to define the method by which sin was propagated to posterity; and however much it fails to explain the sense of guilt. On the other hand, this 'kingdom of sin' is simply the total effect of sin in individuals, and as an explanation of sin is simply useless, endeavouring, as it does, to account for sin by the universality of sin, when it is the universality of sin that itself needs accounting for. He further explains that 'the subject of sin, rather, is *humanity as the sum of all individuals,* in so far as the selfish action of each person, involving him as it does in illimitable interaction with all others, is directed in any degree whatsoever towards the opposite of the good, and leads to the association of individuals in common evil'.† But this idea, while doubtless right enough in itself, brings no light to the matter, for the sin of humanity as the sum of all individuals is simply the sin of all individuals, while the individual is conscious of sin as his own individual guilt. It does not explain sin in the individual by saying that humanity is sinful, for that again needs explaining. As long as Ritschl moves among this class of ideas he really makes no advance on Schleiermacher; but in confining the subject to the experience of the Christian reconciliation he reaches a point of view from which fresh ideas take rise, and although these ideas are not embodied in a complete system, and their con-

* 'Justification and Reconciliation,' 344. † ib., 335.

clusions, perhaps, evaded, they must receive some recognition in any serious effort to construct a doctrine of sin.

Despite his intention of confining the subject to a religious value-judgment, he appears to start out from the Kantian position of the will. 'Sin is not an end in itself, not a good, for it is the opposite of the universal good. It is not an original law of the human will, for it is the striving, desiring, and acting against God. In the individual it comes to be the principle of the will's direction, for it establishes itself as the resultant of particular appetites and propensities. For as a personal bias in the life of the individual, it originates, so far as we are able to observe, in sinful desire and action, which as such has its sufficient ground in the self-determination of the individual will.'* His definition of sin also moves along the same lines: 'sin is rather in all instances opposition to the good, that conception being defined in the ethical sense, so that the least deviation from the good, or even the simple omission of the good already forms opposition thereto; for the good must be unconditionally and completely realized by the will at every moment.'† But these are only formal principles, and with his strong sense of the reality of the Christian reconciliation Ritschl is not content to remain satisfied with them as explanations. He first, therefore, definitely separates sin from the notion of evil; for evil is so far a relative term that in the Christian experience evils may be transmuted into goods. Evil is always a natural event, and has no direct relation to sin.‡ Here at last we meet with the recognition of a point that might have saved confusion in the discussions we have examined. Then he proceeds to do duty to the graduated weight of sin everywhere recognized in the New Testament, and makes the standard of that estimate the degree in which sin separates a man from the possibility of the experience of salvation. Measured by that standard the degrees of sin range from that of 'sin as ignorance' to 'sin as final decision against

* 'Reconciliation and Justification,' 349. † ib., 379. ‡ ib., 350-3.

recognized good'.* Now, having once admitted the factor of ignorance, the question rises as to how far its operation may be extended. 'Ignorance, as experience teaches in the case of children, is a very significant factor in the origin and development of sin. Children when they enter upon the common spiritual life of man are neither equipped with a knowledge of good or of the moral law, either as a whole or in its special details, nor endowed with an inclination to decide against the good as a whole. Rather, they must first learn to value the good in its special details, and amid the special relations of life in which they stand; for they are absolutely unable from the very outset of life to comprehend the good in its universal character.'† Now, along with this ignorance they possess will, which has, therefore, its range of activity unlimited by moral considerations. Have we, then, in this condition a sufficient explanation of the emergence of sin? Ritschl guards against this by acknowledging that ignorance 'is not the sufficient ground for the confirming of the will in sin; for the will and knowledge are not wholly commensurable with one another'.‡ Yet whatever *inborn* sin in all men may be it 'could only be viewed under the form of ignorance', and 'how ignorance can be a sinful propensity prior to all activity of the individual will is unintelligible'.§ He admits, however, that there is another kind of sin which may disclose its character in a 'final and thoroughgoing' opposition to God. But this distinction is really a standard only possible to God's view of man; we can never use it in judging ourselves or others. Now, since God loves sinners and views them as capable of redemption, since He must love them, not because they are sinners, but because of a possible change of heart; and since we must not usurp that judgment of God which alone can discriminate these salvable sinners from those who have taken the final step of rejection, 'we ought to be satisfied with comprehending all these instances of sin

* 'Justification and Reconciliation,' 377. † ib. ‡ ib., 378. § ib.

under the negative category of sin as ignorance'.* If now we go on to ask what is the relation of God to this sin regarded as ignorance, it must be guarded from being ascribed to the operation of God as a harmonious element in the world-order. Yet 'it is an apparently inevitable product of the human will under the conditions of its development, but, conscious as we are of our freedom and independence, is nevertheless reckoned by us as guilt'.† And yet he says that 'our judgments regarding sin must be in harmony with the Divine judgment',‡ and 'His estimate of sin as ignorance must be accepted with due reverence'.§ But what of those who may finally reject the love of God; do they not still remain irreconcilable factors by this method? Whether there are any such obdurate souls, 'and who they are, are questions that lie equally beyond our practical judgment and our theoretical knowledge'.‖ Are we, then, to accept the only conclusion that seems to be open, namely, that sin, when understood in the light of the highest religious experience, the Christian reconciliation, is reduced to ignorance, and that the guilt of sin and, therefore, sin itself, is shown not to exist? Ritschl's method would probably not sanction our pressing his arguments to this conclusion. He keeps open the possibility of a final self-determination to sin. 'In so far as the change of heart which is to be brought about by God's love towards sinners must be conceived under the form of freedom of the will, we cannot conceive that result as taking place where sin, regarded as enmity against God, has reached that degree of self-determination in which the will has deliberately chosen evil as its end.'¶ But we can never know whether such a stage has been reached, and, therefore, the complete material for a formal doctrine of sin is not within our possession. Instead of following the course usually adopted for practical moral ends, and assuming that what we condemn in man as sin is due to

* 'Justification and Reconciliation,' 379. † ib., 380. ‡ ib., 380. § ib., 379, 80. ‖ ib., 383. ¶ ib.

his deliberate choice of it as sin, for which he is therefore guilty, Ritschl concludes that the true course is to assume that all men's sin is due to ignorance. If this is not assumed he does not see how we can announce to men the love of God or offer them the reconciliation made known in the Gospel, and to Ritschl's method this merely pragmatic outlook of the doctrine is sufficient. This, however, leaves the system in the air. Ritschl has undoubtedly done theology a great service in separating it from philosophical presuppositions, but it is beyond his power to prohibit us from making the experience of the Christian revelation the pathway to reality, that is, of making it into a metaphysic. He has, in the case of this question, erected an additional barrier against such an advance to philosophy, in that he declares that the conclusions reached are entirely negative, namely, 'that the love of God to sinners, as the motive of His purpose of redemption, and as the ultimate efficient ground of their conversion, cannot be extended to those persons in whom the purpose of opposition to the Divine order of good has come to full consciousness and determination'.* But the principles admitted already carry us beyond these qualifications: the fact that God loves some men must mean that with them sin is not a final choice, and surely the Gospel assumes that God loves all men; moreover, the observed facts of ignorance are made to cover so much of the ground that it is of little additional consequence if they can be made to cover the whole.

That Ritschl has done immense service to the practical side of the doctrine is indisputable, especially in that he has recalled us to our main task of preaching the Gospel of reconciliation, by showing how impossible it is for us to undertake the task of passing judgment on men. His recognition of the factor of ignorance remains something which no theology can in the future afford to ignore; but can anything prevent thought from advancing to the conclusions following on his ideas, and from the

* 'Justification and Reconciliation,' 383.

consequences that then appear? If the sin-consciousness is, as many theologians state, to be interpreted as a consciousness of guilt, then it is surely here shown to be entirely delusive. And how then is the sense of forgiveness to maintain itself? If these terms of sin, guilt, and forgiveness are to remain, they must under this system receive an entirely different connotation. The analysis of these terms must, therefore, be undertaken before a final stage of our inquiry can be reached. But meanwhile, is it not a fact that we are conscious of having oft-times sinned against knowledge? Does not Ritschl's system here break down on the immediate facts of religious experience? It is not so easy to give as decided an affirmative as might be imagined to be possible. Even in our own case we are unable to say whether a deeper knowledge might not have led to an opposite decision in any case of sinful choice, because if we say that we had all the knowledge we really needed to judge of the reality of the matter, then sin with such knowledge is certainly an event which can not only never be forgiven, but never be overcome, because of the complete disorganization and destruction of the moral judgment it must entail; it certainly partakes of a thorough-going rejection of the good, and it seems to necessitate a final opposition to the good. If God can love one at such a moment, and if He can forgive one after such an act, then His love is incomprehensible and His forgiveness a miracle. This, it will readily be granted in many quarters, is precisely what the Christian experience discovers His love and forgiveness to be. But this feeling cannot be exactly corresponding to reality; for it would mean that at the very heart of the Gospel we are asked to accept what is incomprehensible. Whatever place the incomprehensible have, and for us it certainly looms large, yet in a Gospel there must be that which can be grasped, which answers to something already known, however imperfectly. If any one can be persuaded to regard his sin as a thorough-going rejection of the good—that is, as having no extenuation of ignor-

ance—then the more he realizes what his sin really is, the more he must be driven to despair and to doubt the Gospel. And there certainly is a conception of sin which has brought many a man to this condition. And yet who will deny that this condition of acute realization of sin is the most hopeful element in a man's progress to truth and freedom?

The only other way out of these conclusions would be to suppose that Ritschl has erred in one of his principles, namely, in the idea that God can only love those who are capable of experiencing salvation. It is certainly conceivable that men have been endowed with a degree of independence that makes it possible for them to alienate themselves finally and entirely from God in impenitent hostility. If, however, we are going to combine this notion with the Gospel declaration of the love of God to sinners, then we must either assume that this particular class of sinner is not loved by God, and that the love of God is therefore not universal and must not be declared to be so, a distinction that Ritschl appears to think may be possible with God, although it surely cannot be deduced from the declaration itself, since it is sinners without qualification that God is said to love; or we must hold that God does love these incorrigible sinners, but that His love is eternally impotent to do anything for them, and this involves the conception of God suffering the eternal pain of unrequited love, which must still yearn for ever over those He cannot save, not to speak of the idea of the complete failure of His purposes. If these positions are impossible, as they surely will be to any truly Christian theology, then we must try and find some other means of reconciling the Christian consciousness of sin, and presumably of guilt, with the conclusion that sin is really due to ignorance. These questions must be borne in mind when we attempt the task of construction, but meanwhile it is to be noted that the method of confining sin within the area of religion has not resulted in confirming the sense of individual

guilt, and, therefore, the method seems to end in the denial of its own premises: the consciousness of guilt is shown to be illusory when once the consciousness of reconciliation is attained and made the regulative idea of theology.

Bearing in mind these unresolved difficulties, we can now proceed to examine a final class of theories where the method adopted is that of empirical observation.

# IV

# Theories which seek to explain Sin from Empirical Observation

We shall have noticed that there has been a growing tendency in the various systems we have examined to seek confirmation of philosophical speculation in the observed facts of human development. This tendency appeared strongly in Hegel, and it receives acknowledgment in the Ritschlian system. It is natural to find, therefore, that attempts at a solution of the problem of sin have been made by the method which starts out first of all from empirical observation. The increasing popularity of this method with the modern mind is due to the general distrust of abstract or philosophical reasoning, with the doubtful conceptions it seems to start from, and the unworkable conclusions it seems to reach; it is the fashion to bring everything to the test of experience, and to confine our attention to matters that have experimental value; and the inductive method of Science, which has achieved such notable triumphs in humbler spheres, and which is now invading every department of thought, has naturally gone a long way to popularize this method.

The method we are now to examine seeks first of all to confine inquiry to empirical and scientific observation, and only afterwards to advance to religious or philosophical explanation. We have to notice in closing two efforts which have been made in this direction.

# Modern Theories of Sin

## Pfleiderer

The theory advanced by Pfleiderer is to be found in his 'Philosophy of Religion'. He starts out by denying that we can find the source of evil in creaturely limitations, in the sensuous nature, or anywhere save 'in spiritual direction of will', that is in selfishness. 'What is illegitimate is that individual will, instead of seeking its satisfaction in accord with the whole, seeks it outside the whole and against the whole, and thus seeks to make itself the whole.'* This is against the reasonable order of the world, and is therefore 'the resistance of the particular will to the Divine will'.† But evil does not consist from the outset in *conscious* rebellion against God. In the earliest stages, or in children, it is not connected with the God-consciousness at all. Evil is therefore connected with free will. But even if we refer the origin of evil to the free choice of the individual, we conflict with the pronouncements of psychology that 'the will is never in reality the empty possibility indeterminism takes it to be, equally capable of turning to any side and after any action, empty again, undetermined without direction'.‡ Such a theory would deny the connectedness and development of the moral life and leave it open to possibility that 'the best man might in one moment become the worst'. There could be no explanation of the universality of sin on this theory. Where, then, does evil come from? 'The undeniable fact of experience, that from the very dawn of moral life we find evil present in us as a power, the origin of which accordingly must lie beyond the conscious exercise of freedom',§ determines our inquiry to be one that shall seek for what lies prior to the conscious exercise of freedom. Pfleiderer rejects the idea of pre-existence as mere speculation. Neither can he see anything more valuable in the strictly philosophical

* 'Philosophy of Religion,' Eng. Trans., iv. 26. † ib. ‡ ib., iv. 27. § ib., 28.

conception, as in Kant, in which the determining free act does not precede the individual's earthly existence in time, but is said to be related to it as the timeless ground, to be assumed only in the notion. For if this notion be strictly taken, this determining free act is not an act of the free being in time, but only the becoming of the free being. Neither can the origin of evil be transferred to a fall from goodness, since evil cannot arise in a will which is purely good. What motive could be advanced for such a fall? If we adduce pride, lust, or unbelief, then we admit evil prior to the fall, and then the so-called origin is not the real origin, but only the first appearance of evil which had its origin elsewhere. External enticement gives us no better clue, unless we assume a latent inclination to respond. Yet the first sinful act always presupposes a sinful state. To what conclusion, therefore, are we driven? 'The psychological genesis of evil is not difficult to understand', the satisfaction of natural tendencies is necessary to life, and the tendency towards this satisfaction lies 'in the essence of the will, or indeed is that essence'.* In all this there is nothing that is evil in itself, for there is no moral consciousness, no moral law which would inhibit the satisfaction of any or every impulse. The first check comes from without, from parents or society, which inhibits natural impulses, but in the presence of self-will, with its strong desire to live, there is little chance of the inhibition being obeyed. A series of experiences, of which punishment is one, leads to the discovery that the prohibiting will should at least be obeyed, since it has power of enforcement behind it. Further experience awakens the perception of the rightness of many of the prohibitions and commands, and gradually there is erected into supreme position a moral consciousness which gives more valid, because they can be recognized to be higher, ends than the mere satisfaction of the selfish will. The point clearly brought out is that the conception of morality only arises after

* 'Philosophy of Religion,' iv. 34.

natural impulses have shaped the will. At first, therefore, the external command only stimulates the self-will to obstinate resistance. Therefore the ego, when moral consciousness awakens, finds within itself 'a powerful inclination of self-will to lawlessness'. It is this which appears to give confirmation to the idea of original sin, or of natural evil, but the ideas are inaccurate, since self-willing is not in itself evil, and since evil is only present to moral consciousness, cannot be called evil until that consciousness has arisen. The transition is, moreover, too gradual for us to be able to detect the first sin. What then becomes of imputation and guilt? They are relative and belong only to a conscious self-determination against the moral norm. 'From the point when moral consciousness awakes, there is imputation in exact proportion to the possibility which exists at each particular stage of the development of conscience, of overcoming lawless inclinations, by summoning as motives to contend with them the moral insight existing at the time.'* 'Every step in the development of conscience, every widening of the moral view, every increase in refinement of judgment, or in instinctive feeling of right and wrong, augments the possibility of reaction against abnormal impulses, of overcoming the bad motives by goodness, and thus increases with man's moral freedom his responsibility for what he does and leaves undone.'† 'If accordingly evil only becomes actual in the lawless self-determination of the finite will, then evil must have its origin in the creature, not in God.'‡ 'Evil is neither willed of God as an end, nor wrought by Him as His own act.'§

How does Pfleiderer think that God is related to this creature who comes only gradually to the light? God must have seen the *possibility* of evil which is inseparable 'from man's nature as a being made for freedom'. But God must have seen that this condition was likely to be realized, so 'it may be said that God permitted evil for

* 'Philosophy of Religion,' iv. 38. † ib., iv. 38. ‡ ib. § ib.

sake of the good which was not to be attained without this condition'.* 'Evil was foreseen by God and ordained along with the good, not as a thing that ought not to be, but as a thing that could not not-be. And as we conceive evil to be an element of the Divine world-order along with the good, though an element accidental merely, and to be got rid of, we know it to be dependent on God, and His unconditional rule over the world to be secure.'† 'Evil is opposed to the one will or reasonable purpose of God: it is certainly denied by His Ego, yet it must certainly fall within the sphere of that organic interaction in which the whole life of God unfolds itself, because otherwise there would be no possibility of it being overcome by the reaction of the Divine organism of the world-order.'‡

The evil of the world could not exist in disharmony unless the individual beings of the world were real independent separate wills, different from the one will of reason, or the self-conscious Ego of God, and could not be overcome unless the separate wills and individual powers were embraced by the unity of the whole life of God as subordinate moments of it.§ What must be God's attitude towards our condition? Pfleiderer says that it must be one of 'sympathy'.

This effort towards a Theodicy is perhaps as good as can be reached along these lines, but what are we to say concerning the result attained: that empirical observation pronounces the verdict of the conscience to be untrue when it blames a man for being in a condition of rebellion against the will of God? An immediate release from the difficulties of this system would be for us to abide by the declaration of conscience as of supreme validity, and from that higher point of view deny the whole of the facts here adduced. But this course could not be followed by any reasonable and faithful theology until the declaration of the conscience had been carefully analysed and the alleged facts and conditions of human development

* 'Philosophy of Religion,' iv. 38. † ib. ‡ ib., 39. § ib.

fairly examined. The closer examination of these facts and their ability to explain the origin of sin, and the degree in which they conflict with inner experience and contradict theological ideas, may, however, be deferred until we have examined an English writer who comes to very similar conclusions.

## Tennant

In the Hulsean Lectures for 1901-2, on 'The Origin and Propagation of Sin', Dr. Tennant has set a long-needed example to English theology in his frank endeavour to recognize the new facts concerning man's origin brought to light by scientific research, and to discover what alteration they entail in the theological doctrine of sin. There is probably not much more of real contribution to the subject than can be already found in Pfleiderer, and the conclusions do not seem to be so clearly recognized and so determinedly faced, but the Lectures have led to some stirring of thought among English theologians, and certainly demand serious attention.

After giving a brief outline of the chief philosophical and religious explanations of sin, and finding them inadequate, Tennant proceeds to the empirical account of the origin of sin, as it may be gathered from the observations of anthropological and psychological science. At the outset he attempts the task of defining the thing to be explained, namely, 'the isolated single act of sin: a *sin*'. 'This is an activity of the will, expressed in thought, word, or deed, contrary to the individual's conscience, to his notion of what is good and right, his knowledge of the moral law or the will of God.'* This definition 'only deals with that aspect of the sinful act which associates it with the moral responsibility and guilt of the doer'.† 'Whenever "sin" is correlated with "guilt" it is used solely in the subjec-

* 'The Origin and Propagation of Sin,' 2nd ed., 163. † ib., 164.

tive sense.'* Therefore, 'sin is a concept of subjective ethics'.† With this definition in mind he denies that natural impulses, or inherited qualities can be called sinful. They are only the *material* of sin, but the material of the sin is not the cause: 'the only cause of sin is will'. Indeed, he objects to the term 'sin' being employed as anything more than a convenient abstract noun; it must not be elevated into a metaphysical reality. What the exact value of this definition may be we shall discover by seeing to what conclusions it leads us.

In addition to the psychological considerations advanced by Pfleiderer the evolutionary hypothesis of man's descent is accepted, but the weight of the evidence is made to rest upon demonstrable and observable facts of man's developing life. He traces the failure of past attempts at explanation to the method of endeavouring to explain sin by an examination of what it appears to be in its highest development, 'viz. the conscious rebellion of the creature against God',‡ and abandons, therefore, the method employed by Schleiermacher and Ritschl. It is somewhat surprising that Tennant can dismiss the religious method so lightly, but this is doubtless due to his being mainly concerned with the empirical origin of sin. For a complete theory of sin some recognition of what sin is for the religious consciousness is surely necessary, and it is doubtful whether an empirical account really gives us an origin of sin at all, when we bear in mind that according to this author, sin is to be correlated with guilt, in which case it is evidently a concept of the religious consciousness. These are points to be borne in mind as the system is unfolded. He quotes the old antinomy: on the one hand the universality of evil, which suggests that there must be a common origin for man's sinfulness; on the other, the individual sense of guilt. These cannot possibly both be absolutely true, and Tennant feels that the proposition of the universality of sin is the one that must either

*'The Origin and Propagation of Sin,' 2nd ed., 165. † ib., 164. ‡ ib., 78.

be abandoned or restated if we are to get to any solution. 'It remains, therefore, to inquire whether that side of the antinomy which has hitherto been expressed in the form of an assertion of inborn sinfulness, or an inherited disturbance of our nature, cannot be modified and interpreted so as to be free from such notions as we have found good reason to reject; and, further, whether this can be done without at the same time renouncing either the truth of our physical and organic unity, or that of our responsibility for sin.'* From anthropological research he concludes that we have evidence that man was natural before he was moral. In a savage state man had a notion of the 'tribal self' before he was conscious of a personal self, and he obeyed custom before he learned to obey moral law. He acknowledges that it is impossible to trace the precise point of transition, where obedience to an 'externally imposed authoritative restraint', passed over into an ethical attitude towards a moral code, but sees that, whenever it occurred, the appearance of evil at this 'point would not be a deed such as man had never done before', but 'the continuance of . . . practices . . . or certain natural impulses after that these things had come to be regarded as conflicting with a recognized "sanction" of ethical rank'.† 'The sinfulness of such acts would gradually increase from zero.'‡ But 'what of their guiltiness in the subjective sense'?§ 'Degree of guilt in this sense is determined not by the actual moral value of the code transgressed, but by the degree in which the transgressor recognized himself to be bound thereby, the awe which he felt towards it, and the intensity of the sense of wrongdoing and shame which he was capable of feeling after its transgression.'‖

But what influence have these facts of remote and scarcely human history upon our present problem? This, that individual development seems to repeat the racial

* 'The Origin and Propagation of Sin,' 81. † ib., 93. ‡ ib. § ib. ‖ ib.

history. Child psychology, and also less scientific observation show that 'the human infant is simply a non-moral animal'.* 'The faculties, as we may still conveniently call them, of will and "moral sense" are made, not born.'† The earliest period of child life is organic, and the impulses that sway are all selfish, but absolutely necessary to self-preservation. 'The apparent "faults" of infantile age are in fact organic necessities.'‡ These animal propensities are really quite neutral to a moral standard; they have no evil bias, for they are 'the necessary basis of our finest moral sentiments'. 'With the dawn of will and reason, morality first becomes a possibility.'§ The moral ideal is first given by social environment, until there grows within 'an idea of goodness or right conduct which is perfectly concrete, embodied at first in a person, and afterwards in God'.‖ This 'new-born moral agent' has now before him the mighty task 'of moralizing his own nature',¶ and in this task is to be found 'the occasion or source of universal sinfulness'.** 'It is simply the general failure to effect on all occasions the moralization of inevitable impulses and to choose the end of higher worth rather than that which, of lower value, appeals with the more clamorous intensity.'†† Sin occurs here if there is a failure to moralize completely this natural material.

On this account Tennant believes that the phenomenon of the universality of sinfulness is sufficiently explained, and yet is neither excused nor explained away. 'If sin can be traced back, in race and single person, to its beginnings in the transgression of a sanction not then recognized as that of God, it loses nothing of its exceeding sinfulness for us to whom it is none the less a deliberate grieving of the Holy Spirit.'‡‡ Sin may be something empirically inevitable for every man, but that does not imply its theoretical or absolute necessity. The conclusion of the whole matter is an emphasis on 'man's

* 'The Origin and Propagation of Sin,' 98. † ib. ‡ ib., 100. § ib., 105. ‖ ib., 106. ¶ ib., 109. ** ib., 110. †† ib. ‡‡ ib., 113.

crying need of grace and his capacity for a Gospel of Redemption', a redemption, however, that will need to be somewhat differently defined than it has been in the past.

In an attempt at Theodicy to which Tennant then addresses himself, he admits 'that responsibility for the *possibility* of moral evil and for the opportunities for its realization lies with God', but maintains 'that responsibility for the actuality of moral evil lies with man'.* We may pass over the conception of the relative independence of man's will to God's that this theory is said to demand, together with the expression given to the Christian hope, that evil shall be 'ultimately transcended and overcome', and address ourselves to consider whether Tennant has really explained the universality of sin, and whether he has been able to guard the responsibility and guilt of man. We may assume that the facts of human development as stated are indisputable. Do they explain sin, and if they do, what are the consequences for our conception of sin? It is in facing these conclusions that Tennant seems to lose his customary clearness, and fails to quite comprehend the essential issues. Suppose that sin is now reduced—and it is a reduction—to failure to perform a task that is recognized to lie before men, a task the difficulties of which are the most immediate experience of life. Certainly there is a vast difference in the guilt attaching to the sin which can be described as a failure to accomplish an exceedingly difficult task, and the sin which we have been accustomed to regard as a deliberate, responsible, and wicked adoption of an attitude of enmity to God and all good. Yet Tennant seeks to maintain man's full responsibility for moral evil, while admitting that his pre-moral history seriously handicaps him. We cannot have it both ways. Either the natural ancestry of the human race, and the existence of the individual before the moral ideal dawns for him, affect the question or they do not. If they affect the conditions of

* 'The Origin and Propagation of Sin,' 122.

the problem so that man cannot be expected to emerge from non-moral to complete moral consciousness without falling into an act which he recognizes beforehand, however dimly, to be sin, then although the responsibility, in the sense that this individual who has unity of consciousness did this thing, may still be retained, yet the exceeding sinfulness of the sin chargeable to the individual is considerably reduced. Tennant does not consider the factor of the correlation of responsibility to guilt which we have raised, although it is surely important. If on the other hand man's responsibility and guilt are to be fully retained, then it must be shown that the moment the moral ideal dawns on a man his antecedent history is negligible and ceases to affect the question. But if this is to be allowed, of what value is Tennant's inquiry into the conditions of human life which precede the moral epoch? It must be replied that they have nothing at all to do with the real problem; and why a man consciously sins therefore remains as hopeless a problem as ever. We must therefore endeavour ourselves to face the problem that Tennant hardly seems to realize.

The moment a man becomes conscious of a moral ideal which presents itself as something which he ought to realize, and yet fails to do so, there are various possible explanations of his failure. He may attempt, only to fall, because he has not the strength suddenly to perform an unusual action, and in that case his failure can hardly be reckoned as blameworthy. He may fail to recognize the absolutely imperative nature of the moral ideal; it may only have a faint element of moral necessity for him; it may not be sufficiently alluring; and if we acknowledge that the strengthening of any of these elements might produce a different result, we must admit that incomplete moral perception is operative here, and this again lessens the element of guilt. The only other explanation possible is that a man, feeling the absolute nature of the ideal, and strongly attracted by its moral appeal, deliber-

ately and consciously rebels against it, and turns in a direction that he knows to be fraught with consequences disastrous to his moral life. In this last case only is guilt in its full sense chargeable; and when we come to ask whether such cases of guilty perversion are numerous, nay, universal, what an impossible question we have really raised; for it is a question concerning which we have no certain material for our answer. Unless Tennant can prove that, at any moment when the moral ideal appears to a man the will is wholly free, has power to obey, and has knowledge both of the freedom and power, and that there is a clear consciousness of the nature of the ideal and of its import for his being, then it would be difficult to blame for the failure. On the other hand, if it is true that all these conditions are somewhere and somehow present to every one at some time or other, in that case how could you expect empirically a universal failure, and how is it that as a matter of fact we find all morally constituted beings conscious of such failure? Either it must be shown that there is nothing in man's developing condition to necessitate universally a conscious act of sin, or it must be shown that there is no universal consciousness of guilty sin; and the facts of observation and inner experience appear to be equally against both conclusions. The position reached by Tennant, is, that in explaining one postulate of the antinomy he has endangered the other. In tracing sin to something that is neither sin nor evil, he has failed to confirm the individual sense of guilt. That some alteration must also take place in the other member of the antinomy Tennant apparently recognizes in the following statement: 'Sin only emerges when the moral faculty has begun to pass upon our thoughts and actions a moral condemnation. The individual thus discovers himself to be sinful. He does not rightly find himself to *have been* sinful in the past in which he knew no law, or to have been "subject from birth to an indwelling power of sin". If his consciousness tells him he has

thus been from the first the subject of sin, it is because it expresses its immediate experience in terms of a theory supplied by uncritical and unreflective "common sense" and uses a rhetorical and faulty metaphysic.'* The concession here made is capable of a rather indefinite extension, and again emphasizes the need of examining the actual content of the sense of sin, which is here recognized to contain admixture from theoretical quarters. The position gained, therefore, is that the facts adduced by Tennant remain to be considered, but it is doubtful whether in his conclusions he has given them the full force that they carry, or whether he has faced the consequences involved; and he has been kept from this, not so much from fear of making God the Author of sin, for that he is saved from by his conception of the relation of God to the individual, nor from fear of altering the conception of the redemption that man needs, since he is evidently prepared for that, but from fear of saying anything that would minimize human responsibility or weaken the sense of guilt.

His Theodicy has defects which only appear when these inevitable conclusions are more resolutely admitted. In giving man's will a relative independence, the responsibility of God is only partly excluded, since whatever we may mean by 'will' it is not the only factor in the situation, unless it is to bear a much wider definition than is usually granted. If by 'will' is meant the power to originate action, man's responsibility for the action is, of course, undisputed; but his responsibility for the moral quality of the action is to be measured by the degree of moral illumination he possesses. Now, is the degree of moral illumination possessed a matter of which a man at any stage of his career is responsible? A being possessing a faculty of originating action, and yet without full moral vision is a most dangerous creature, and if it cannot be shown that his moral illumination is as independent of God as Tennant would make his will, it seems

* 'The Origin and Propagation of Sin,' 118.

impossible to prevent the conclusions that would wreck any Theodicy, by imputing the guilt of human sin to God. The conditions of Tennant's Lectureship have, of course, prevented him from following the matter any deeper, and probably from considering those questions which have undoubtedly occurred to him, but as the work stands it introduces considerations which seem inevitably to demand more reconstruction of the Christian doctrine of sin than has here been attempted.

Pfleiderer's system has the advantage of recognizing these conclusions, and of facing them more boldly. He maintains that moral evil owes its existence to the creature, but acknowledges that the individual responsibility for it is in proportion to the development of conscience attained. He therefore refrains from speaking much of man's guilt, and admits that God's attitude to our condition is 'sympathy' rather than that wrath and condemnation which we have been taught to regard as His righteous attitude to our wickedness and depravity.

## Conclusion

This brings us to the conclusion of our examination of 'modern theories of sin', and the general tendency of these remains fairly obvious. With the exception of the Kantian position, they all tend to reduce largely the circle of human conduct to which sin in the strict sense can be applied, and to cast serious suspicion upon the alleged consciousness of guilt, in that they fail to confirm its judgment by the philosophical, religious, or empirical methods, at least in its depth and extent. The greater ethical feeling which has been constrained to make sin and guilt commensurable terms has apparently introduced a factor which seems inclined not so much to solve the problem as to show that the problem does not exist.

Whether the Christian consciousness can maintain itself on such theories remains to be seen, but Christian theology has in too many instances hurriedly yet resolutely declined to consider the position along these lines at all. The cry is therefore 'back to Kant'. But it is doubtful whether we shall gain anything by that, as in our examination of Kant we endeavoured to show. If Kant is to be our refuge then we must either accept Müller's hypothesis of a fall in another existence, a most bewildering and undemonstrable position, or claim that all empirical observation is pure '*schein*', and condemn ourselves for all our sinful condition as due to utterly responsible, reprehensible, and guilty choice, in which all degrees of sin are lost in its infinite magnitude, and from which it seems impossible for there to be any escape either by human reformation or Divine intervention; for Kant makes us to have sinned, not as weak human creatures, but as gods; whence it follows that as gods we can never forget and never forgive ourselves, neither can anything in heaven or earth redeem our fallen nature. Surely that is an impiety which shall make even our sins of this dimension. Certainly no theory of redemption can touch the Kantian radical evil, except by some change that would not be a redemption but the destruction of personality, and the substitution of something utterly discontinuous and infinitely different in its place. There remains, therefore, nothing for us to do but to attempt the task of examining the sense of sin as it appears in the individual, of accepting the facts of empirical observation, and from these endeavouring to build up a theory of sin that shall satisfy both.

PATON CONGREGATIONAL COLLEGE

## III

## CONSTRUCTIVE

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# I

# Introduction

Before we proceed to the task of constructing a theory which shall endeavour to embrace the considerations drawn from scientific and empirical observation and also from the verdict of the Christian consciousness, it would clear our discussion from irrelevancies if we were briefly to notice some objections which, it is affirmed, doom our efforts to failure from the very outset. They take in general three standpoints: (1) the objection that the recognition of anthropological theories, in that they make sin a necessity, destroy the very notion of sin as that which ought not to be; (2) the objection which assumes that from the scientific standpoint of natural history on the one hand, and the ethical standpoint of the conscience on the other, the problem is approached in two such different ways, that while each is legitimate, any reconciliation in one theory is impossible and ought not to be attempted; (3) objections which declare that from the very nature of the case the problem is insoluble.

I.—Professor Orr has lent his authority to a very uncompromising attitude on the question in his 'God's Image in Man'. He assumes that 'on the basis of current anthropological theories, we can never have anything but defective and inadequate views of sin'. His method is to show that the supporters of the evolutionary hypothesis have not yet agreed upon the cause of evolution, nor demonstrated man's natural descent from the animals, and that only the belief in the original purity and moral harmony of man, from which he fell by a voluntary act, can allow us to retain the Christian notion

of sin, human guilt, and the redemption of Christ. But throughout the whole discussion, many of the vital objections which our inquiry has forced us to recognize are passed over without adequate notice. The whole attack is directed against dividing the evolutionists against themselves; the much more important facts of individual, psychological, and moral development are not sufficiently recognized. All the host of difficulties that equally beset the idea of an original voluntary fall from goodness are ignored. We meet more than once the phrase, '*hereditary sin*' to describe the condition of mankind since the fall, without any consciousness apparently that it is a contradiction in terms. The whole subject is discussed entirely without reference to the sense of sin which is the consciousness for which alone the subject arises. For instance, he condemns anthropological theories because 'they take no account of the fact that it is wrong for a moral being to be in this state of unredeemed brutality at all'*; where the whole outlook is confused by judging man from the standard of a moral ideal which had not then emerged. He acknowledges that an act of egoistic sin, in the first moment of transgression, may not disclose its exact nature,† without realizing that this introduces a qualification into its subjective guilt. The inclusion of an individual, without his consent or desire, in a tainted race, the conditions accompanying man's moral development, the possible ignorance of the nature of the act at the moment of transgression—all these seem to Professor Orr negligible elements in the problem. But the difficulties lurking under the inadequate presentation of his own theory come into view when he proceeds to the removal of human guilt and sin by a Divine redemption. 'The first presupposition of the Doctrine of the Atonement is that the world is in a state of sin and guilt from which it needs redemption.'‡ But he fails to show how, if a man has wilfully and wickedly sinned in an 'infinitely evil and condemnable'

* 'God's Image in Man,' 210. † ib., 217. ‡ ib., 274.

way, his guilt can be removed. He explains the effectiveness of the redemption wrought by Christ as due to the fact that Christ, like Adam, is representative and can perform a racial act. But there is a double contradiction of all ethical judgment in this conception. First it is assumed that if we are members of a sinful race, that is our guilt, and then that this guilt can nevertheless be removed by an act by which Christ endured the penal sentence of death attaching to sin, Himself having never sinned. This measures the reality of the racial guilt as something at least removable by an external arrangement. Can we be expected to take that seriously which can be removed by a representative? Our racial guilt is due to unconsenting inclusion among the posterity of Adam; would Professor Orr allow the removal of racial guilt through Christ to take place also without our consent? Why should the conditions that apply in the condemnation not apply in the justification? If Professor Orr would, however, allow that somehow Christ has removed the guilt of the entire race by His death, apart from any response on the part of man, but that man's actual yielding to the conditions of 'hereditary sin' in which he is born, remains his deeper sin for which he is entirely responsible and guilty, then how the personal acceptance of Christ's act for us would remove that guilt we are not told. When sin, in the orthodox sense of personal guilt, has been brought home to a man it is questionable, whether, instead of this being an indispensable presupposition to the Gospel, it is not rather, in the exact proportion in which the meaning of guilt is realized by him, a most effectual barrier to belief in the Christian declaration of forgiveness. The orthodox explanation of the problem gives not only an incomprehensible origin of sin, but also excludes any possibility of redemption from it.

To the philosophical and empirical theories that seem to make sin a necessary experience for every human creature, the favourite objection is that they evacuate the

notion of sin, as that which ought not to be, or, that 'the necessity of sin is a contradictory notion, denying in the predicate what the subject affirms'.* It is difficult to determine exactly what weight this really carries. If the definition of sin as that which ought not to be, is to be absolutely regulative, then surely it is just as possible to claim that since sin ought not to be, then in God's world it cannot be and is not. The objection that once sin is made necessary then it ceases to be sin in the sense of personal guiltiness must, however, be allowed, and is the real difficulty of the problem. 'Are not guilt and liability to condemnation and punishment essential elements in the notion of sin; and can we connect penal desert with that which, in the order of the world or the nature of things, is the necessary condition of moral attainment?'†

II.—The objection to our task which assumes that the moral and natural accounts of sin are both correct so far as they go, but impossible of reconciliation, is one that might provide a convenient refuge if our task was found after all to be impossible, but it is one that we can hardly take advantage of until we have tried every means of harmonizing them. This position is acceptable to the Ritschlian theology, which is content to keep the religious consciousness quite apart from strictly intellectual demands. But even if it is acknowledged to be illegitimate to fit religion into some preconceived scheme of the Universe, can it be shown to be equally illegitimate to proceed from the religious consciousness which has solved so much for us to a scheme of the Universe which shall be in harmony with our highest experience? Yet this position of complete dualism seems to be contentedly accepted by Harnack. This comes out frequently in the criticism of the Pelagian controversy in his 'History of Dogma'. 'It is easy to show that in every single objectionable theory formulated by Augustine, there lurks a

* 'Fundamental Ideas of Christianity,' Caird, i. 202. † ib.

true phase of Christian self-criticism, which is only defective because it projects into history, or is made the foundation on which to construct history.'* 'In Augustinianism the doctrine of nature is beset with contradictions, because it is impossible to give a rational account of nature and history from the standpoint of the grace of experience.'† 'The legitimate point in Augustine's doctrine lies in the judgment passed by the child of God on himself, viz. that without God he is wretched, and that this wretchedness is his guilt. But this paradox of faith is no key to the understanding of history.'‡ 'As Augustine erred in elevating the necessary self-criticism of the advanced Christian into a doctrine, which should form the sole standard by which to judge the whole sphere of God's dealings with men, so Cassian erred in not separating his legitimate theory from the rule by which the individual Christian ought to regard his own religious state.'§ 'Is not the doctrine of original sin based on the thought that behind all separate sins there resides sin as want of love, joy, and Divine grace? Does it not express the just view that we feel ourselves guilty of all evil, even when we are shown that we have no guilt?'‖ Emerson seems to have a somewhat similar idea. 'Saints are sad because they behold sin (even when they speculate) from the point of view of the conscience, and not of the intellect: a confusion of thought. Sin, seen from the thought, is a diminution, a *less;* seen from the conscience, or will, it is pravity or *bad.* The intellect names it shade, absence of light, and no essence. This it is not: it has an objective existence but not subjective.'¶ Caird makes a good comment on this dualism. 'It is hard to suppose that there should be any such cleft between the intellectual and the moral life as would be implied in saying that convictions, which are imperative to the conscience, are contradictory or inexplicable to the

* 'History of Dogma,' Eng. Trans., v. 221. † ib., 203, 4. ‡ ib., 212. § ib., 249. ‖ ib., v. 221. ¶ 'Works,' Riverside Ed., iii. 80.

reason.'* Moreover, it is questionable from Ritschl's account of the religious consciousness whether the dualism need be maintained, for does he not show that the realization of reconciliation presupposes that our sin has been due to ignorance? True, he limits the application of this to the negative principle that we should not assume that sin is other than ignorance, in order that we can with confidence extend to all men the forgiveness of God. But surely when we ourselves have become conscious of reconciliation we are bound to assume that *our* sin was due to ignorance. We may find it possible to retain all the feeling of sin, which is so valuable to all moral progress, without conflicting with the facts of observation, for it is likely that the declaration of the religious consciousness has not yet been correctly analysed.

III.—The objection that the problem is incapable of solution, would, if we could be certain of it, save us a lot of trouble. Henry Van Dyke says, man 'cannot find the perfect answer' to the question of how evil came into being, 'because his reason is limited and conditioned, and because his intellectual power itself has developed under the shadow, and within the sphere, of the very malign presence which he seeks to account for'.† 'We can give no rational account of its origin (i.e. of evil), because its origin appears irrational.'‡

But, however, can we know *a priori* that a problem is insoluble? We can hardly come to that conclusion without exhausting every possible effort, and even if we are eventually driven to that position, we must allow it to work both ways. It will be equally beyond our knowledge to affirm that evil is due to the voluntary guilty act of man, even if that alone would confirm the verdict of the conscience. We may choose to abide by the con-

* 'Fundamental Ideas of Christianity,' i. 203.

† 'Gospel for a World of Sin,' 20. ‡ ib., 26.

science, but we shall not be able to assert that we have any idea as to what its verdict really means.

There seems nothing therefore left to prohibit us from making our modest attempt at a deeper understanding of the problem, and of following those lines of investigation that still lie open. We can hardly pretend that we shall find a complete explanation or be able to construct a perfect system where so many have failed. But we may at least push on so far as we have light, and endeavour to see what reconstruction, if any, is needed in the Christian doctrine of sin, and whether the facts of science and the facts of conscience can be held together in some fashion that is not entirely contradictory and incomprehensible.

It will be unnecessary for us to go over the questions which from the general tendency of our critical inquiry have been shown to be inadmissible, but we shall assume that that inquiry has failed to confirm sin in the strict sense of personal guilt. We shall therefore endeavour to see whether a Christian view of sin is possible that does not define sin to be completely identified with guilt.*

* Our attempts at construction will not follow the scheme or order of a formal theory, but the main points and conclusions have been printed in SMALL CAPITALS, and these read through consecutively will yield a more formal and concise view of the argument.

# II

# Sin in relation to the Sense of Sin

An inquiry into modern theories of sin, such as we have undertaken, leaves us with the general impression that the subject is inscrutable, at least, along the lines that have been attempted. The vastness of the subject makes it intractable; in every direction questions run out into the unknown; it seems to involve every other problem that has successfully baffled the mind of man. The lesson of our inquiry seems, therefore, to be obvious: if any fresh light is to be gained we must try fresh methods or adopt and extend those which have been attempted with the most promising results; also, we shall have to confine ourselves to narrower issues and remain content with a humbler purpose. A complete explanation of sin is evidently beyond our knowledge or our powers, but the recognition of that need not discourage us from endeavouring to understand those factors which lie within our comprehension, and indeed we shall be well satisfied if we can discover enough for practical ends, even if we fail to meet all questions which a theoretical interest might raise. But it can hardly be forgotten that both these considerations have frequently been recognized and used for purposes quite different from our own. The insolubility of the problem by the human mind has been used to press traditional solutions on our acceptance on the ground of authority; while confining the subject to practical needs has often been quite illegitimately employed to smuggle in a conception of sin as necessary to a certain

*theory* of redemption, when that theory has not been the only one which would explain the practical experience of redemption. What we mean by practical ends in this connexion is such a view of the nature of sin as shall make the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus both an urgent duty and a hopeful task. MAN'S SIN MUST, THEREFORE, BE ABLE TO BE DEFINED AS THAT WHICH CAN BE FORGIVEN, AND FOR WHICH MAN NEEDS THE ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS. It is not at all likely that this definition of the practical ends of our theory will be reckoned as sufficient in all quarters. Some will want such a view of sin as shall shut up men to despair of any forgiveness save that which is supposed to be possible on a certain theory of transactional atonement. But since forgiveness is the central declaration of the Gospel and the abiding experience of the redeemed, any theory of redemption has only the validity of being able to bring assurance; and what can be more evident than that certain theories of redemption are increasingly failing to bring assurance, while those theories of sin that are supposed to be congruous to them make the possibility of forgiveness problematical?

Moreover, the method applied in many attempts to solve this problem is one of which the modern mind is distrustful. It is too entirely deductive. It has first to accord with certain views of God and His relation to the world, with the conception of man's independence, and with the necessity for a certain type of redemption. But these in turn are speculative. The method we shall therefore follow will be inductive. But if that is to rule, we must be willing to start from the subjective. That will not mean that objective reality is denied to our subjective experience; but it recognizes that for religion, sin must first of all be a matter of personal experience. It seems likely that a complete mistake has been made in starting from sin as an objective fact, as a dogma universally true of the human race. This course has been followed by an illegitimate application of Biblical state-

ments, which are treated as external facts revealed to the writers apart from their experience, instead of records of actual experience and personal judgment illumined by the highest religious consciousness. This altered view of these statements does not throw any doubt on their truth; rather does it give an assurance of truth that no fact outside experience could have. For instance, the Apostle Paul is conscious of being a sinner; he is also conscious that all men are sinners, for the state of his own soul and the actions of his fellow-men both conflict with the ideal of Christ. But it is evident that in passing from the judgment of himself as sinner, to the judgment of other men as sinners, while both are true for himself, there is this difference, that in the one case he is *conscious* of being a sinner, while in the other case, those on whom he passes judgment may not be conscious of themselves as sinners. Now, this point makes all the difference when Paul, or any one else, sets out to convince men of their sin. He may endeavour to prove to them that his judgment on their case is true: it is a dogma to be accepted; or he may endeavour to produce within them an experience similar to his own. Now, there is no doubt that the first method, in which a dogma is accepted, may be useless for all purposes of religion, but that the personal experience is all important and absolutely necessary. The dogmatic method must therefore give place to the psychological; for if our inquiry proceeds along the lines of the dogma of universal sinfulness, we do not thereby necessarily reach the point of deeper reality, the personal consciousness of sin. Moreover, a man committing some action which Paul, for instance, judges sinful, but which the man does not, is an altogether different case from the man committing an action which he himself regards as sinful. We really need two words to describe these different conditions. We might use 'evil' for the act or state of which the agent is morally unconscious, and reserve 'sin' for evil of which the doer is himself conscious as evil. But it is

questionable whether it is wise to attempt this at the present stage. Meanwhile we must remember that the distinction exists.

Now, it is evident that sin is not a thing, but a quality; and its application to an act or state is relative to a standard or norm of good, or to an ideal of what things ought to be. All this, of course, has nothing to do with its seriousness or with the reality of sin. There are deeds and states to which the term sinful is applied, and they are, of course, just as real as the deeds and states to which the term good is applied. But the point is, that the application of the term is, for the human mind, movable. In the evolution of morality and religion the term 'sin' comes to be applied to things that once were reckoned indifferent, or even good and right. Sin is relative, therefore, to the idea of the good. Now, it can be shown that sin is also relative to the sense of sin. And this does not mean merely that any judgment of sin is always due to *some one's* sense of sin, but it also means that the sinfulness of sin is greatly increased if it is done with the knowledge that it is sin. It may be objected that every being capable of rational thought knows himself to be a sinner in that he is conscious of falling short of his own sense of what he ought to be. This may be so, but it may be with him such a dim feeling that it has little effect upon his actual conduct. The sense of sin may be very weak, while the sinfulness as judged in relation to some external standard or some higher moral consciousness may be very great. It is very evident that the subjective sense of sin is by no means commensurable with sin in its broader and objective aspect. Indeed, it is a notorious fact that sin in the subjective sense is in inverse proportion to sin as objective. It is those of the purest life who are most aware of their own faults and the sins of the world. The saint may weep for the world's sins, of which the world is very happily unconscious. Now, theology may proceed to discuss the problem from the point of view of some objec-

tive standard, but in doing so it abdicates any claim to be a science of religious experience. It is rather sin in relation to a subjective standard that demands our first attention; and this means that we must investigate the *sense* of sin.

What, then, is the sense of sin? It certainly has differing degrees of intensity and poignancy in various persons, and it would be best to take it first in its lowest form of manifestation. Every person capable of introspection will witness to a consciousness of inner disharmony, a variation between what he is and what he feels he ought to be. In most, however, this is not a phenomenon which greatly concerns them. The gulf that separates is not so wide, the desire for harmony is not so strong that this condition becomes unbearable. *What they ought to be* is not a very insistent or a very clear idea, and it may only present itself after some mental search, and, perhaps, only occupies the conscious field in some moment of unusual emotion or abnormal disturbance of experience. In other cases the sense of sin may be very strong and persistent, so much so that it becomes the dominant idea, and may threaten to destroy all happiness and even disorganize the mental balance. And between these two extremes there lie infinite degrees of sin-consciousness. Yet, measured by any objective standard, this intensity of sin-consciousness will be, as already stated, probably in inverse ratio to the measure of attainment of that standard. Is the sense of sin, therefore, illusory? To give a full answer to this would require us to settle the whole question of subjective and objective reality; but, meanwhile, we can recognize that the intensity of the sense of sin is of the highest value to the moral evolution of the individual. The person in whom it is not strong will easily be content with his moral development; the person keenly conscious of sin may be spurred thereby to greater heights of character; but the consciousness of sin may also become so absorbing that it tends to unsupportable misery, and so

leaves the character stationary in moral despair. THE SENSE OF SIN IS THEREFORE VALUABLE IN THE DEGREE IN WHICH IT LEADS TO MORAL PROGRESS.

Now what is the cause of this sense of sin? It must be due to some disruption in the nature. A person wholly wicked and depraved would be at peace because moral requirements and moral attainments would be in harmony. It requires, therefore, the existence of two conditions. There must be the consciousness of a moral ideal, and a nature or character that is felt to fall below that ideal. Now how can this disruptive condition have come to be? The dual condition cannot itself be regarded as natural, for while the moral ideal always presents itself as something entirely natural and necessitous, the failure appears to be abnormal and unnecessary. It cannot be regarded as a permanent condition of human nature, since it is unbearable, and there must always be a struggle to find harmony in one direction or another. It must be due, therefore, to some *alteration* within the nature. The most common idea is that it is due to a fall from goodness, occurring either in a past ancestor who transmitted his corrupted nature together with some inner memory of the higher condition to posterity, or something which simply happens to every individual at some stage or other in his career. The latter idea would of course require some explanation of its universality, and it is not confirmed by observation. Children do not appear to be born with a moral condition from which they afterwards fall. There is nothing, however, in our inner sense of disharmony that conflicts with an ancestral fall from goodness. Indeed, the real strength of that doctrine has been almost entirely due to its apparent explanation of our inner condition. But philosophically it is quite incomprehensible that there should be a fall from real goodness. Anthropology has, moreover, set its face against this doctrine; and it is beyond the power or province of theology to dispute the point. Anthropology may be proved to be wrong in the future as it is proved

to have been wrong in the past, but theology cannot undertake to challenge its pronouncements nor build on the hope that it is wrong. It must simply note the fact that anthropological science cannot find any confirmation of an historic moral fall. What answer does psychology return to the question? We have much to learn in this department yet, but there is nothing discernible here that seems to need the theory of a fall. If the memory of a perfect life persisted along with a corrupted nature, it would either remain stationary, or more probably would gradually fade from the mind of the race. That there are people whose moral ideals, judged from an external point of view, seem to have faded, is a matter of common enough observation, but we can never be sure that this is really the case, since so much of the outward morality may have been due to imitation, prudence, or fear. But there are two elements in experience that seem to conflict with such an explanation: we are often much more conscious of the sinfulness of an act after its committal than before, and we are certainly subject to development in our moral ideals. The moral horizon widens, the moral heaven becomes clearer and remains more persistently in our consciousness as we make moral attainment the great object of life. All this is hardly conceivable on the theory of a memory of a perfect life, and it becomes entirely inconceivable when we watch the moral development of a child. In this case it is not until some years have elapsed that there are any indications of consciousness of a moral ideal; and whenever this stage is reached a very critical period is entered upon. Everything, therefore, seems to point to man as being subject to moral development, moving upward to a stage never before realized. As far as the inner facts of experience and the facts observed from without can be harmonized, the emergence of the sense of sin would seem to take somewhat of the following order. The life of the infant is non-moral, it is neither good nor bad, and for a time its life is allowed to develop on purely natural lines. But

the requirements of social life make it necessary to limit the natural development of the child; we cannot be allowed to grow up in absolute selfishness, to have all our own way. Then commence years of repression and discipline, in the home and in the school, which to the child wear the aspect of the imposition of unnatural restraints. The recognition that force is on the side of the adult, or the awakening of love for parents leads to a voluntary acceptance of these conditions, until there arrives a time when a moral code is adopted which is recognized to have inherent rights. The origin of this new feature is not caused entirely by society, since it always has something quite individual about it. It must be, therefore, some inner spiritual thing to which the child awakes. At this time what is known as conversion often takes place. Yet there are also many cases where this critical period ends in rebellion, and the whole future of the moral life is endangered. Bearing these two possible issues of this state in mind for further examination, we can now address ourselves to inquire for the origin of this moral ideal, for it is with its dawning that there appears also the sense of disharmony, so that it is evident that THE MORAL IDEAL IS THE OCCASION OF THE RISE OF THE SENSE OF SIN, though we must be careful to avoid making this mean that the moral ideal is the cause of sin.

The sense of sin is only possible in the presence of a vision of the good that can claim the allegiance of the new-found life. But if the facts of developing consciousness have been correctly outlined, it is evident also that the dawning of the moral ideal must always produce a sense of sin. The moral ideal only comes into consciousness after the nature has already developed, and in this new-found light the nature is perceived to be lacking in the requirements of the ideal. Then comes the sense of disruption, disharmony, and sorrow, and this may have issue in one of two ways. The shock of the discovery may give exceeding pain and discomfort, and to seek to escape from this is an immediate natural impulse

developed by long habit. This can be effected if we shrink back from the light, since that is felt to be the cause of the pain, and this is the course frequently taken, with the result that moral evolution may be indefinitely postponed, or, indeed, so far as we can see, never commenced within this life at all. A violent rebellion against the imposition of this unwelcome visitation often seems to have an issue more favourable to its ultimate victory than merely attempting to forget its existence; there is often a recoil of shame, the daring adventure is carried too far, and the moral ideal becomes a blazing and awful resistance. The young prodigal may come back home in penitence, while the more prudent elder brother remains outwardly respectable, but morally callous and incapable of advance.

It is when a religious interpretation is put upon this new experience that the whole matter receives its clearest illumination, and the sense of sin becomes most definitely explained. There are, however, many interpretations claiming to be religious. It may be conceived that the sense of pain is a sign that God is angry, or that the subject is utterly depraved and wicked, and then there is no relief until it can be shown that the wickedness is forgiven, or that God's anger has been turned away by some means. At the age when this condition usually occurs there will not be much stumbling at the assurance given, so long as it is sufficient for its purpose. A very mechanical theory of the Atonement may be quite sufficient to bring relief. The ultimate effect of this treatment is, however, various. Under the increasing moral development which may follow, the explanation given may come to be regarded as insufficient, with results sometimes disastrous for the person's faith in the ethical reality of Christianity. Or the theory of Atonement may satisfy for all life, sometimes not affecting the character one way or the other in its Godward development, since few persons are ever logical in the application of their creed; but sometimes also completely atrophying

the moral sense, which is replaced by a pseudo-religious sense.

It is now clear that before we can determine what the sense of sin really signifies we must understand why the consciousness of the moral ideal, or the consciousness of God, which is only the clearer and necessary interpretation of the moral ideal, comes to man only after some years of natural life, and then why it comes in different cases with differing strength and with differing results.

The Christian consciousness, i.e. the consciousness that God is as Christ was, forbids us to assume that God is moved by favouritism, or by obscure causes beyond our ken, to visit some people with saving light, while He leaves others altogether alone, or only reveals Himself insufficiently. He wills that all men shall be saved. We cannot think that God withholds or reveals His grace arbitrarily. It is the undoubted conviction of the religious experience that we find God because He has long ago sought us. This is the truth that Calvinism sought to express: that from the Eternal purpose of God, from His care of us since the first moment of our being He has been seeking to bring us to Himself. It is entirely illegitimate, however, to conclude from the same experience that because others do not discover Him, this is due to His neglect of them. How, then, can we explain the fact that some early answer to God's mercy, while others never seem to awake to the fact of God at all? One way of regarding this problem, which would get rid of some immediate difficulties, would be to suppose that these differences of response were entirely due to man's moral disposition. This seems, however, to be excluded by the observation that many men have never had the religious opportunities which others have enjoyed. We may say, with Paul, that the very heathen have a natural law which they have not obeyed, and therefore they are without excuse; but no one for a moment can imagine that their responsibility is equal to the man who has been brought up in a Christian land, and has felt the attrac-

tion of Christ. A curious fact also confirms the suggestion that some other element than human wickedness is needed to account for the various relations in which men stand to God, namely, that those who do welcome God's revelation never regard that as due to any merit on their part, and can never comprehend how it is possible that any individual who had experienced God's call and grace, as they have done, could at the same time resist it; they can certainly never assume that it was due in their own case to less wickedness than there is found in other unregenerate men. Then there must be some other factor, due neither to God's withholding of Himself from men, nor to man's withholding himself from God. Yet it seems impossible to admit any third factor without infringing on the Sovereignty of God or of endangering the freedom of man. But our inductive method will not allow us to be deterred from facing certain facts because they seem to imperil important conceptions which we believe to be essential. We must first inquire whether there is any other factor visible to empirical observation, and then endeavour to fix its relation to those already mentioned. Now if it is a fact of our own experience that we ourselves are subject to moral development, and if common observation requires this to explain the conduct of others, then it seems clear that all men are, at any given moment, at varying stages of moral development, and that this is due not only to age, environment, or education, and such more or less external conditions, but also to a difference of moral consciousness, which appears to be ultimate to the personality, and not due entirely to individual choice or self-determination. The existence of this difference is analogous to that differing degree of consciousness existing in various persons, which psychology has made a familiar notion. It may be assumed, for our understanding of this condition, that the same universe environs us all, but that it does not appear the same to us all; so that it is what the universe is for consciousness that

is all-important for any one individual. A man's universe may therefore be defined as that series of facts to which he is accustomed to pay attention. Why one man pays attention to so few facts and another to so many takes us into a realm where only ignorance of the delicacy and complexity of the psychological problem would enable us to dogmatize in one direction or another. Now, using, for convenience, a similar terminology, we may say that the same moral universe surrounds us all, or in more religious language, the same Infinite, Loving, and Holy God, but that this actual moral universe becomes for every man simply that universe of which he is morally conscious, the set of moral facts to which he is accustomed to pay attention. Why one man sees more than another, pays more attention to these than another, is entirely beyond our knowledge. We are bound to assume, therefore, at the outset that this factor of varying degrees of moral susceptibility does seriously affect our problem, and introduces an element, the cause of which being unknown, prohibits us from settling in any given case, the proportion of blame due to any man for his sin. The point at issue cannot be decided by a reference to the ideas of man's responsibility and freedom. These ideas only have the practical value of enabling us to declare to others, and to assure ourselves that all are capable of moral advance; but to press this to mean that man is entirely responsible for his degree of moral consciousness is illegitimate until it is proved; and when treated in this extreme way it has not its supposed value as necessary to the idea of moral freedom, for when examined closely it appears only to show that man is *irresponsible* at the very core of his nature. Whatever the value of this idea, then, it cannot be used to closure this discussion.

Meanwhile, let us gather up what we appear to have gained so far. Sin as a subjective fact is found to be relative to the sense of sin; the sense of sin is due to the emergence of a moral ideal within a life hitherto respon-

sive only to natural needs; and the value of a sense of sin or divergence between these two, will be such an interpretation of it as shall ensure moral progress, and not in any light that it is supposed to throw on the problem of human responsibility. The conclusion gained, therefore, is that the sense of sin does nothing to decide how sinful in a guilty and responsible fashion any individual or the whole human race is, but bears witness, in the first place, to the emergence of the moral ideal. This must not be taken to imply that the sense of sin is illusory and valueless; it only shows that the sense of sin does nothing in itself to confirm the common theological interpretation of sin, which, when once thoroughly understood and applied, would render everything meaningless and human nature hopeless, 'lost' in the absolute sense and not in the relative sense of the New Testament; and it leaves the way open for some religious interpretation of the sense of sin which shall conserve vital interests. Nor are we to assume that this conclusion does anything to lessen the horror felt at sin, by the man to whom the moral ideal, or the call of God has come. That must rest on feeling and not on any theories, and can remain acute enough to be valuable even when all these conclusions are given their due place.

But in taking up such an unusual position we lay ourselves open to the charge that we are simply denying one of the immediate declarations of the sense of sin, namely, that we are guilty. We must therefore turn to examine what is meant by guilt.

# III

# Sin in relation to Guilt

It has been commonly held that man has a clear and immediate intuition of the answer to the problem we have been endeavouring to solve, which not only contradicts the conclusions we have found ourselves driven to adopt, but makes all our theorizings unnecessary. Man is said to have an indisputable sense that he is a guilty creature: to deny this is to silence conscience and to destroy the very springs of moral life. It is not affirmed that all men are equally conscious of their guilt, but that under the illumination of the Spirit of God man does become conscious that his sin is the result of his own unfettered choice for which he is alone and entirely responsible; and that he is deserving of punishment and exposed to the righteous wrath of God; in short, he knows himself to be a guilty sinner. In this revelation we reach the absolute truth about humanity.

Now, before we analyse and examine this declaration, let us first see what it would mean if it were true. Under illumination, man comes to a certain judgment on his condition, his responsibility for his condition, and his sin for having made that condition his. Now, what he sees himself to be under this illumination must be the ultimate fact about himself, and also the ultimate fact about every other human creature. All men are guilty, therefore, whether they know it or not. They have all freely, responsibly, and wickedly been the sole cause of their own condition, however unconscious of this they may profess to be. This guilt must of necessity apply, not only to deliberate acts of sin, but to the state, nature,

or condition that makes these acts possible; for in this illumination we certainly perceive, not only our conduct, but our very selves to be sinful and unworthy. If the sense of sin is a witness to our guilt, then our natural condition must be taken to be our guilt equally with those acts of transgression and wickedness that are only manifestations of our condition. Now, this judgment undoubtedly condemns the whole of our observation as mistaken, makes our long puzzling over this question a foolish irrelevancy, and condemns nearly all modern thinking on this subject as the most hopeless error and madness. Let us, however, be first of all clear as to what is meant by guilt in this connexion. Guilt as a term of ethical meaning is recognized to exist where there is entire responsibility, complete freedom of choice, and clear consciousness of the moral issues involved, and the modern theological use of the term usually bears this connotation; although this ethical meaning is by no means the original signification of the term. (From A.S. *gylt, gyldan,* to pay; meant originally liability to punishment. The younger Hodge defines 'guilt' as legal responsibility, which he says can be imputed from one to another; this only means 'fictional responsibility' to modern conceptions. For the now prevailing view of 'guilt' as moral blameworthiness, see 'Theology in Outline', Adams Brown, 283-4; 'Outlines of Christian Theology', W. N. Clarke, 246-8.) Decrease any of these elements which constitute guilt and guilt itself is proportionately decreased. Now, whenever you decrease guilt in this way, you really make its very existence problematical, for the increase of any one of the diminished elements to its full power might have altered the situation entirely, the issue would have been different from what it was, and the cause of the sinful choice would, therefore, be traced to the diminution of that element, by howsoever little it was reduced, and guilt becomes speculative or vanishes altogether; it requires the presence of these elements in perfection for guilt to

be fully charged. If, then, observation teaches us that a child has some years of natural life before it has a clear moral consciousness, this observation is either to be dismissed as a delusion, or passed over as a factor that makes no difference. If observation shows that numbers of our fellow-creatures pass their lives in conditions that make evil characters the results most to be expected, then either those expectations are unfounded or the conditions have nothing whatever to do with the results. It means, in short, that our empirical observation and our ethical judgments are all to be dismissed in the consideration of this problem as 'moonshine'. This is a position that is probably held by very few, and yet, it should be noted, it is exactly the Kantian position to which we are so often asked to return in order to recover our ethical sanity and idealism. Modern thought, and indeed any kind of *thought,* makes it impossible to keep up this attitude, and hardly any responsible person faced with the realities of life can be found to defend the position in its entirety. It used to be very emphatically stated that man was guilty for the nature he inherited from Adam, and this was held to be just, either because Adam was the representative head of mankind, which seems to imply that we should all have done as he did if we had been in his place, or that all mankind fell in him: the latter a purely meaningless speculation, whose origin is due to a supposed declaration of the Apostle Paul, now known to be a clumsy mistranslation. Even conservative writers now admit that the individual cannot be held guilty for the nature with which he starts life, nor for the conditions in which he finds himself born, but it is thought to be possible to subtract these and to hold him guilty for all the rest. Now, not only does this concession deny the sin-consciousness, which makes us feel guilty for our *condition,* but it is unworkable in practice, for the process of subtraction is in this case inapplicable. No one can tell what the result of subtracting these conditions would have upon any particular case. Others would

go further and say, with Müller and Tennant, that we must allow for everything that conflicts with the strict notion of guilt, and only think of man as guilty when he chooses in freedom and knowingly chooses the evil. But how are we to know when these conditions occur? That, it will be said, does not matter; they do occur somewhere; and there, wherever it is, man is guilty. We cannot help noticing, however, that these concessions must enormously reduce the instances of real sin. But it will still be maintained that all men are guilty of this kind of real sin at some time or another. This means that whenever any man comes to this point of clearness and freedom, that he universally sins. This, however, assumes too much. Is it a fact that all men do come to such a condition? It is open to serious doubt. And do all universally sin at this point? This is incomprehensible. Let us remember that it is now impossible to plead the sense of sin as deciding the point here, for the sense of sin is certainly also felt in regard to the entire character and the whole nature. You cannot deny its application in the one direction on the ground of certain empirical considerations and afterwards bring it in to prove guilt because empirical observation fails. The sense of sin must either be taken in its original application, as showing complete guilt for all that we are, or it must be shown that this is an incorrect interpretation of its meaning; we cannot retain its interpretation as implying guilt while limiting its application within certain prescribed conditions.

But now let us suppose that we have a condition where all the elements constituting true guilt are present; then we are faced with two difficulties. In the first place, sin in these conditions assumes an entirely incomprehensible character. What can be the significance of an act, where a man feeling the attraction of the good, seeing the evil to be evil, and recognizing the issues of his choice, yet chooses the evil? It is beside the point to interpose with the concession that sin must always be

an incomprehensible choice. We are shut up, in the case we are considering, either to the conclusion that the choice is made because it *is* evil, when we certainly have to suppose an evil nature, and our conditions are not satisfied, or, we must conclude that the choice is motiveless, that is, *without moral significance at all.* In the second place, is it not true that in so far as these conditions are attained by any process, sin becomes proportionately less; the more these conditions are present, the less is a wrong choice likely to be made?

But if now we go on to suppose any case where a man does wrong which he knows to be wrong, and we cannot deny that we often do things which we know to be wrong, we still have to ask whether some increase of the sense of its wrongness would not have led to a different choice, before we can decide the amount of guilt. Would the deliberation, which in a supposed case ended in a choice of sin, have had the same issues, if the man had seen the sin to be, not only some slight aberration, some darker against a lighter grey, but as God sees it to be, utterly black and bad; if he had known that this sin would never satisfy his nature, as he probably expected it would; and if he had possessed the power to have acted on his higher vision and knowledge, and had known himself to have possessed the power? All that we can say with absolute certainty is, that we do not know; but that from the different issues when a man comes to a truly Christian consciousness of God, it looks at least probable that an alteration of the conditions would have a different result.

But to all this mass of complicated evidence, which appears to our intellects to be at least of doubtful purport, there is said to come an omniscient judge, who, without hearing any of it, and indeed refusing to be biased by evidence, pronounces an immediate verdict of guilty. This judge is conscience or our sense of sin. Now is a verdict of guilty actually given by the conscience or some inner sense? Is that feeling which we experi-

ence when God comes to us a sense of our guilt? That we possess certain faculties which perform strictly defined functions is a way of thinking that psychology has rendered obsolete, and it would be useless, therefore, to show that the faculty of conscience, as such, can have nothing to do with pronouncing on a matter of guilt. The position from which we must set out is that we have a certain perception of moral value to which the usual evolution of mind brings the majority of thoughtful men. We become conscious of a moral ideal, that is an idea of our character and actions which we feel we ought to be and do. The cause and origin of this ideal we can only completely explain as due to the presence of God to our consciousness; and of this ideal all men can be shown to have some dim recognition. For many it is doubtless so dimly seen that it has not power to do anything more than produce an occasionally felt 'pricking of conscience', sense of discomfort, or haunt of melancholy unrest. The Christian Gospel, however badly interpreted, is the most efficient force known to history for awakening men to the nearness and holiness of God. The Life, Character, Ministry, and Death of Jesus, apart from all theological interpretations, have the sublime power of rendering the unimaginable nature of the Infinite real to men, not as distant in space, nor appearing only in past history, but as present to and immanent within the soul. This is the psychological account of the reality lying behind the marvellous effect which Jesus has had upon men all through the Christian era. The contemplation of Him provides us with a form, an image, an idea which enables us to see God. The fact that this occurred within a truly Human Personality augments the faintly recognized imperative of the moral ideal with the force of an absolute command that we ought 'also so to walk, even as He walked'. This explains the sense of condemnation and judgment which men feel in the presence of Jesus, which persists even when the logical application of certain theological conceptions of His

Person would make such feelings uncalled for. In the light that Jesus throws on life, our condition is seen to be not only a falling short of the glory of God, but a limitation, a contradiction of our own nature, a denial of humanity. It is not claimed that this experience of judgment and condemnation is found only within the Christian religion; it is only claimed that in the interpretation of the Christian religion it reaches its brightest illumination and its supreme vindication as due to the presence of a Holy God within us.

Now the immediate sensation following this consciousness of the ideal must naturally be one of the most painful confusion. It is as if a tiger suddenly developed a conscience, a demon became the residence of an angelic spirit, a sinner stood before the throne of God. There cannot but be anguish in the juxtaposition of two things so utterly dissimilar, the natural or semi-moral nature, and the beauty, purity, and holiness of God seen in Christ. Now it has been claimed that this experience, in all its varying degrees, makes known to us our guilt; that we are wickedly responsible for not being in conformity with this ideal that seems to have broken in upon us. But it is difficult to see how this can be. This sensation of pain that accompanies the ideal can of itself yield no information concerning guilt, either in general or particular; either how guilty we are, or whether we are guilty at all; for the simple fact is that GUILT IS NOT A FEELING, BUT IS AN INTELLECTUAL JUDGMENT, to be proceeded to only when certain conditions are ascertained to have been present; and whether these are present, and in what degree, in any case, even that of our own, is a matter which omniscience alone could decide. There is a fact of Christian experience that undoubtedly goes to support this separation of the judgment of guilt from the sense of sin: the higher the attainment of the Christian character the more vivid is said to grow the sense of sin. If there is any reality in the moral progress under the experience of redemption, this must mean that the less actual sin

there is the greater is the sense of sin. Now it cannot be understood that the growing sense of sin is taken by the saint to be an index of ever deepening guilt, for then the Christian life would involve an increase of anguish that would be frankly intolerable. If certain passages can be quoted from saintly biographies to prove that this is not a correct account, then, if they are not merely exaggerations, they prove how very far short even some of the saints have come from entering into the very heart of the Christian experience. It is quite impossible to assume that to one who is not yet a Christian the sense of sin signifies guilt, but does not do so the moment he becomes united to Christ. An interpretation must be found that will explain them both.

Now, leaving aside what interpretation is to be placed on the sense of sin, if it were possible on other lines to show that the entire guilt of sin attached itself to any human soul, and that could be definitely brought home to his conviction, it is difficult to see how there could ever be any relief from the consequences. It would mean that evil had been chosen with the full knowledge that it was evil, and because it was evil, an act utterly diabolical, an act whose significance and influence would remain eternally unchangeable. To a soul in such a state of utter wickedness it is difficult to see how repentance could be possible, but it is utterly incomprehensible how there could be forgiveness for such a soul. Nothing can be clearer than that, if theology gains its point here, it has shut out any and every Gospel; the theories of Atonement that are supposed to show how this guilt is cancelled are utterly childish and irrelevant. No substitution of an innocent sufferer, no anguish of desire in the heart of God can do anything to alter the fact of guilt, where guilt really exists. But in the strict meaning of the term, such guilt can never be found, and if it could then men would be proved to be in a position before which the Gospel of Christ would be impotent.

The very meaning of the word 'guilt' as *liability to*

*punishment* goes some way to confirm our contention that the sensation of pain carries with it rather an apprehension of fear than a proof of guilt in the ethical sense. A man staggering under the disclosure made in the sudden light of the moral ideal is filled with the most direful foreboding, and the natural interpretation of such feelings is that some dreadful doom must soon overtake the creature who is in so wretched a condition; for pain and danger have become associated by long experience. That this is the expectation awakened by this moral pain is clearly shown in the easy, and, alas! sometimes fatal relief which comes when it is authoritatively declared that these fears are groundless if we only trust in Christ, since He has already borne the punishment which we fear is to come upon us. It is not denied that this method of procuring relief for the sin-stricken has, in many cases, had the effect of awakening grateful love for the Holy Substitute, which has brought His wonderful life to act upon the soul with transforming power. But this is due, not so much to the suitability of the method, as to the fact that the true Word of God cannot be bound by man, nor the work of God upon the soul permanently hindered by the worst efforts of theologians.

If, therefore, we have shown that what we call for convenience the sense of sin, the sense of our failure, the recognition of our lamentable and abhorred condition, revealed under the illumination of God's presence, cannot possibly be construed into a proof of guilt, then we ought to be able to show how such an interpretation has persisted, and what the true interpretation according to the Gospel should be. We have already shown how the feeling experienced naturally lends itself to the fear that some doom is about to overtake us, but the idea that this is a proof of guilt must be traced to the influence of theological conceptions. If any one doubt whether such an influence is possible, let him read a history of Church doctrine, and notice how many conceptions which owe themselves entirely to the speculations of theologians,

and which were said to be supported by some intuition of conscience, are now numbered among the superstitions that the Christian faith has eventually overthrown. It is notoriously difficult for a man to describe a sensation without mingling with it perceptive and cognitive elements, but these elements can be detected by their alien nature, and nothing is more evident than what often passes for a description of conscience owes a great deal of its content to current ideas and the influences of education. In the days when theology was an absolute science, whose deliverances could be enforced by threats and fears, it was a very natural thing for the silence of the conscience to be taken for its assent. The freeing of ethical judgments from these unnatural restraints has meant disaster for many a long-lived theological idea; they have been unable to stand before the moral sense, a fact of much greater seriousness than any failure to be justified to reason.

The phrase 'the sense of guilt' is therefore a contradiction in terms, if guilt is to be taken in its strict ethical sense; it may be retained if it is used to denote fear of punishment. GUILT CAN ONLY BE ESTABLISHED WHEN CERTAIN CONDITIONS EXIST, AND WHETHER THESE CONDITIONS ARE PRESENT OR NOT IS A MATTER ENTIRELY BEYOND OUR POWER TO DISCOVER, AND THEY CERTAINLY CANNOT BE DISCERNED BY ANY INTUITIVE SENSE. This leaves us with the interpretation to be placed upon the sense of sin yet to be determined, and we shall find that the true interpretation is most clearly revealed in the Christian experience of forgiveness.

# IV

# Sin in relation to the Forgiveness of Sins

THE secret of the enduring appeal which Christ's Gospel has made to successive generations of men, and the amazing relief it has brought to burdened humanity, is undoubtedly to be found in its assurance of the Divine forgiveness. It has always been regarded as the central theme of the Gospel and the greatest experience of the redeemed. The sense of forgiveness gives here and there a high note to the Old Testament literature, but it may be said to have created the New Testament, and is the inspiration of that peculiar calm joy which breathes through all its pages. Yet that which once spoke to men with such precious appeal is in these latter days less and less able to stir any deep interest in the average man or to attract the attention of the mass of the people. It seems to strike them as an irrelevant message: it is not what they want, it does not meet any need of which they are vividly conscious. Among the more definitely religious forgiveness is calmly accepted as a fact, doubtless providing some basis for peace, but it creates no very convincing emotion, nor inspires any very rapt thankfulness. To the thoughtful observer of life standing outside any clear religious experience, who is nevertheless interested in mankind and may be working very heroically for its progress, the whole idea seems to belong to a quite obsolete way of conceiving the nature of man and the meaning of sin. Therefore the message of the Gospel fails to attract men to-day because the condition

to which it speaks forms no part of the common consciousness of even higher humanity. But the absence of the sense of sin is not the sole cause of this apathy.

Although the feeling may not be at all keen or widespread, there is in some quarters a resentment against God's forgiveness of man being made the important element in religion. A restraining reverence would prevent most men from quoting Fitzgerald's lines in this connexion,

> Oh, Thou, who Man of baser earth didst make,
> And who with Eden didst devise the snake;
> For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man
> Is blackened, Man's Forgiveness give—and take,

as a complete account of how the situation stands, but the general acceptance of the theory that man has to win his morality by struggling against a heavy handicap of brute ancestry and unmoralized nature, cannot fail to suggest a secret suspicion that man has in many respects some right to *claim* the forgiveness of God, where religion has been accustomed to take up the position of an unworthy suppliant before the righteous anger of God. An effective antidote to such ideas can hardly be found in any dogmatic refutation of the facts alleged, but must be sought rather in an appeal to facts of inner moral sensibility.

When we turn, however, to those who recognize the moral facts to be the supreme concern, to those who know that it is in this realm that human tragedy occurs, and who feel that only in man's conquest of his inner kingdom does there lie any permanent satisfaction for the individual and any guarantee of progress for the race, even then we do not find that the forgiveness announced in the Gospel is held to meet the situation. Many who hold that all social reformation demands for its permanent success moral reformation, would not be prepared to admit that the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins was anything more than a symbolical recognition

of the idea that sin is something man should not brood over, but something which is to be worked off, by thinking as little as possible about sin as a religious problem. To the reformer who views man in social units, the forgiveness of sins seems rather a useless, if not a dangerous notion. It is not forgiveness of his sins that man stands in need of so much as the destruction of them, and this will only be accomplished by the evolution of a higher type of humanity. Now, while that demand is met by the promise that in Christian experience a new type of humanity is manufactured which is precisely the type that is needed if modern hopes concerning the possibilities of mankind are to be realized, yet the received interpretation of Christian experience introduces an unwelcome element, in that it starts out with the demand that the only entrance to this new life will be found in a conscious acceptance of God's gracious gift of forgiveness. The defence of this position usually put forward by theology is that, before God can come to man's help, before the new heart that he so sorely needs can be given to him, there must take place some personal reconciliation. The holiness of God has been repelled, His sovereignty has been denied, and His honour has been outraged by human sin. Man must recognize this, feel profoundly sorry, and beg for forgiveness; then God will forgive him on the ground that Christ has made the satisfaction that man ought to have made to God's holiness, justice, and honour. Now without going into the question of the necessity and satisfaction of these preliminary conditions, which would involve us in questions beyond the reach of our present inquiry, it must be admitted that all this way of thinking rests upon a notion of God's relation to men as magisterial and legal, which owes more to pagan and Jewish than to distinctively Christian ideas. Moreover, as will be shown further on, such conceptions fail to justify themselves before the psychological account of religious experience. Meanwhile we can recognize an element of truth in this point

of view, in that any real advance of humanity is bound to be accompanied with a sense of sin, and that this cannot be left without some interpretation which shall deal with the problem in a personal way; that is, in relation to an ideal towards which man can have a personal feeling, since no impersonal relation can be an *ideal* for a personal being. This means ultimately that human reformation is only perfectly secured in the experience of reconciliation with God Himself, and His purpose.

Yet it is precisely with this idea of forgiveness as a personal question between man and God that those who are interested rather in the problems and tragedies of the individual soul often find themselves in complete disagreement. If the reformer regards the idea as an irrelevancy, the historian of the soul, the novelist, and the dramatist regard it as an impossibility; there can be no such thing as the forgiveness of sin. Our modern writers of fiction and drama are profoundly influenced by the idea of law. They believe that man does not escape the domain of law in his spiritual experience, but only comes the more completely under it. What is meant here by law is that man in the spiritual side of his nature is subject to the inevitable. The soul processes which the great realistic writers profess themselves able to discover can be roughly divided into two main varieties. The one is an inevitable process of deterioration in which moral laws operate to destroy sensibility, and the other is an inevitable process of moral evolution which involves intense suffering. We cannot enter into the question whether it is possible for both these processes to be subsumed under one law, but must content ourselves with describing the general course supposed to be followed, on which, indeed, there is a remarkable agreement among all writers whose opinions can claim serious attention. Suppose a case where a man deliberately violates his own moral consciousness; he thereby loses moral vision and susceptibility and suffers an

inevitable decline; if he refuses to follow the light, for him the light ceases to shine. The natural end to such a career will be complete moral insensibility; practically, depersonalization and dehumanization. The judgment is of course immediate, relentless, inexorable, and nothing can restore the soul of the man who has committed moral suicide; the advent of new light would only fall on sightless eyes. Forgiveness in such a case is useless if it means mere pardon, impossible if it means restoration. The love and mercy of God stand powerless before laws under whose action man seems able to bring himself.

Now, suppose a case where a man sins in a less deliberate way; where, for instance, his will is overborne by passion, he is caught temporarily off guard, or he has not a strong consciousness of the sinfulness of the act. When the storm is over, when conscience is once more alert, when he emerges into completer light, there will come upon him that awful anguish, shame, and remorse, which is the worst experience the soul of man can know. Now, for this condition the personal forgiveness of God is said to be of no avail. Nothing can alter the fact that this man has attached to himself this deed which now enters into his spiritual history—an eternal fact about himself. Persuade the man by any argument whatsoever that by some mysterious operation outside himself this fact can be erased, and in so far as you succeed you may shatter his moral universe and thus involve him in the other process of deterioration. To the moral sense that remains alive the information that God can *regard* sin as something that has not happened, and will hide His eyes from it, will only damage the moral character of God. God may forgive, but man cannot; if moral facts can be manipulated by God, they remain steadfast for man's conscience. Against such ideas the ordinary interpretation of the forgiveness of sin presents a perfectly inadequate appearance. If it is alleged that the forgiveness of sins is possible because God stands above these moral laws perceived by man, and this announce-

ment is made by the authority of the Christian religion, then the gulf that separates religion and ethics is but widened, and the future and final discrediting of Christianity on the ground of ethical insufficiency prepared for. To answer that the moral law has been satisfied because some one else has borne the penalty, that Christ has suffered, and, therefore, the sinner need not suffer, is an idea that can never be accepted by a being who is morally sane. That assurances of this nature, on the highest possible authority, and under the sanction of the holiest of names, have brought relief to sin-stricken consciences, may be perfectly true; but it leaves us to-day wondering what the nature of the relief actually was. Was it merely an anodyne to the conscience? History and personal experience only yield too plentiful evidence that the explanations of religion have often flouted moral objections, and have led men to ignore the moral consciousness altogether. Surely, what is wrong here is the interpretation of what forgiveness is and how it operates. Is there no interpretation of the sense of sin possible which shall make the assurance of sin's forgiveness necessary and acceptable to the moral sense? If only the proofs of it can be found in the psychology of the religious consciousness instead of in appeals to ideas which are morally undemonstrable, and if we can be allowed to explain the sense of sin without entangling it with the insoluble question of guilt, a way does seem to be open for us to retain this declaration of the Gospel so that it shall have the same sweet attraction, yield the same abiding joy, and contain within itself its own sufficient ground of assurance.

From the conditions incident to man's nature as subject to moral development we have seen that the gradual dawning of the moral consciousness must provoke a severe disturbance, as in the light of its revelation our nature is discovered to fall below the demands of the moral ideal. There are undoubtedly cases where from the earliest days the moral claim is assented to, and here the sense of sin

never takes a poignant and anguished form; but when, from whatever cause, the consciousness of the moral ideal is delayed, and especially if, when it does emerge, it is personified and exalted by being presented in Christ, then it is inevitable that the new discovery of ourselves should produce a shock of humiliation and pain. The peculiar character of the moral ideal, however it may be embodied, is found in what since Kant has been called its imperative nature. It does not visit the soul as if it were an invasion from without, which we may treat accordingly, but as something so deeply connected with the reality, meaning, and duty of the self, that the new demand appears to rise from our very nature, making the disharmony not one between inner and outer, but revealing itself as a gulf within the very bounds of the personality. If any deep meaning of the character and life of Jesus is understood, if the attraction of this life appears as the very life and meaning of our own souls, then there can only result deep perplexity, sorrow, and pain at the disclosure of the falling short, and the actual contradiction of our own nature. If the mind becomes aware of Christ only after years of conscious existence, when the fainter, less intelligible, and less alluring presentation of the moral ideal has been ignored or resisted, the ensuing experience may be of the most painful and desolating kind. Shut up within the same soul, as it were, there are two violently opposed selves, and now the stain, loathsomeness, and disgrace of the one induces a weary conflict and produces the deepest spiritual distress.

This appears to be the plain psychological account of what is known as conviction of sin. The actual outcome of this condition will depend largely upon the religious interpretation which can be given to it. To insist that the sense of shame and the spiritual suffering that accompanies this experience is a proof that we are entirely guilty for our condition is to introduce, as we have endeavoured to show, a debatable idea, which, if it is allowed to have full weight, can only confuse and preju-

dice the issues. To assume, in the opposite direction, that our condition is an illusion to be dismissed as due to an exaggerated conscientiousness is equally dangerous to the glorious possibilities to which this experience might lead. Both these attitudes are to be avoided, if only on pragmatic grounds. But to assume from this condition that we have a proof that God is wroth with us, and needs to be appeased before He can consent to treat with us, is completely contradicted by the experience itself. The declaration of forgiveness to the penitent heart is no truth to be accepted on some external authority, without inner proof and assurance. This condition of penitence is itself the proof of forgiveness. It is perfectly evident that no such estimate of our nature as we attain under this experience would be possible unless there had visited us something higher than that nature. It is God that hath made light to shine in our darkness. He has come to us. Whatever then our nature be, and whatever we judge it to be under the dawn of God's presence, it is not a nature, and our complicity in it is not such as to prevent God from drawing nigh to us. The vision of difference, the sense of sin, call it what we will, is itself the result of God's gracious attitude towards us, and the perfect proof and assurance that He has forgiven us. He might have left us to ourselves. He might have waited for some movement on our part. This He has not done. He has taken pity on our condition of ignorance and sin, and has condescended to this nearness of fellowship that has caused His glory to burst in upon our minds. THERE COULD BE NO KNOWLEDGE OF OUR SIN, AND NO PENITENCE FOR IT UNLESS GOD HAD FORGIVEN US SUFFICIENTLY TO DWELL WITH US.

If, as some theologians would constrain us to believe, this interpretation of the sense of sin is insufficient to assure the sinner of forgiveness, and some logical proof, some externally demonstrable theory that the penalty of sin has been borne by another, is necessary, then we are compelled to point out that this would be to go out-

side religious experience to obtain confirmation of it, and so to leave religion dependent on philosophical speculations or legal ideas. It is a demand for some other proof of forgiveness than God's own self. This is by no means to be pandered to, but resisted in the interests of religion and the development of the moral consciousness. If, however, there should be found to be incorporated with this demand some truth which can only be expressed in the inadequate symbol of substitution, this even can be satisfied without departing from our principles. The pain which the sin-conscious man feels is witness to the fact that God has suffered on account of our sins. The sinner must not be allowed to flatter himself that this pain, or *poenitentia* is of his own manufacture; for it cannot be that the lower nature should feel pain in the presence of the higher. It is always the holy that suffers on behalf of sin: the higher that suffers in the presence of the lower. THE PAIN THAT MAN FEELS FOR HIS SIN, IS HIS AWAKENING TO THE LONG-SUFFERING OF GOD, who, to secure our salvation from a condition which to His thought and creative intention of us is one from which we must at all costs be rescued, has drawn near to us, companied with us, endured by His unimaginable nearness and immanence all that we now see ourselves to be. To do this He has had to bear with us, and to suffer a constant repulsion to His holiness, in order that He might raise us to His own blessedness; and in this sense God has suffered where we ought to have suffered. It was the self-identification of Jesus with the mind and purpose of God that led Him into sympathetic suffering on behalf of man's sins, and to that extent to bear, not the penalty, but the sin of the world; and in so far as His death sums up His whole life the cross stands as the greatest objective proof of God's forgiveness; to be regarded as a revelation within time and humanity of the Eternal attitude of God, rather than the ground or cause of any change in Him. Those who ask for more than this are in real truth asking for some-

thing less, and the very demand discloses them to be more concerned with fear of a penalty than burdened with a real sense of sin. They have not yet allowed themselves to come into the presence of God; they want forgiveness at a distance.

We may say, then, that THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS IS AN INTERPRETATION OF THE SENSE OF SIN, an interpretation hinted in many times and directions, but now fully exhibited and illuminated in the Christian experience.

From this point of view, whatever deficiencies critics may discover, we have at last reached some possibility of reconciling the forgiveness of sin with the inexorable action of those spiritual laws which an untrammelled observation of human character has disclosed to be everywhere in operation. The process that brings suffering to the man who sins, may be regarded as the penalty of self-acting law; but it is equally true to regard it as due to the Love of a Holy God which causes Him to draw near to the sinner, and bear in upon his consciousness the moral demands of His own nature. Without such an attitude grounded in the very nature of God as Love, we cannot explain, on the one hand, the persistence of this law which entails suffering after sin, nor, on the other hand, how the higher point of view, which is the cause of the suffering, can ever emerge within the nature of man. The soul that can suffer for sin is a soul that is spiritually alive, and the very suffering is a guarantee of higher possibilities, because it is also a sign that the soul has already moved beyond the stage where sin is acquiesced in.

Those dealings of God which theology embraces under the idea of Judgment may be shown to be, in one form or another, symbols of the processes by which God is enabling man to return freely to Himself. The reality represented by the idea of the Divine judgment and punishment of sin is by no means to be explained from the analogy of the judicial and punitive method of civilized criminology. If the human ideals of justice,

and the perhaps necessary limitations of the social attitude towards crime are satisfied with apportioning a certain punishment to every failure to accord with, or every rebellion against, human legislation, it must not be assumed that these would satisfy the Divine idea and method of judgment. The law no less than the love of God cannot be said to be at all satisfied merely by proving a man to be guilty, and then by punishing him for his sin. In the first place the judgments of God take no notice of the degree of guilt that is present, for suffering is entailed equally on wilful and on unconscious transgression, always in the natural realm, and frequently in the moral realm. For a man will certainly perish whether he throws himself from a height with intent to self-injury, or whether he falls over it accidentally; and so also the man who commits some sin of which the entire sinfulness is not apparent will still regard it as sinful, equally with a case where it was more deliberate and open-eyed, when he comes under the condition known as conviction of sin; certainly the very state from which sin arises causes suffering to the awakened religious consciousness, even when no individual responsibility for such a condition can be adduced. Moreover, no endurance of any arbitrary penalty could *satisfy* God. The only way of satisfying the demands of the moral law would be that every man should be brought to agree to that moral law and to its judgment on sin. To bring men to this acknowledgment is the supreme end of God's judgments, and in this process suffering for sin must be a necessary stage. Now the difference between a penalty attached to sin, the human expedient, and suffering for sin, the Divine method, is that a penalty can be inflicted which bears no relation to the sin, and can be endured without producing conviction of sin; whereas suffering for sin means that it is the sin itself that causes the suffering. To experience that, therefore, a man needs to be brought round to God's verdict on sin. To suffer for sin means to be aware of what sin is, to be conscious of a higher

and a Divine point of view. With this interpretation we can dimly discern that the judgments of God are but manifestations of His tender mercy, and His laws are another name for what the Christian calls His grace. The recognition of these awful moral laws, and their relentless action, which has given the tone of pessimism to the serious novels and dramas of modern writers, shows already signs of reaching a higher stage in the recognition that this action is capable of a more optimistic interpretation. It is seen that their unbroken dominion is in the end of the greatest mercy to man as a moral being, and full of hope for his eventual development.

When we have reached this point of view, we are in a better position to judge of the fate of those who have so sinned against their light that the brief candle of their morality seems to have been extinguished. We cannot see enough of life to be at all certain that the apparent result is the real and the final one. The sudden awakening of conscience, after years of inactivity when it appeared to be dead, whether brought about by the appeal of religion, through change in circumstances, or when death is near, is a fact that forbids us to assume that complete atrophy of the moral sense has ever taken place in this life. The Christian doctrine of the future punishment of those who die impenitent seems to point to a similar conclusion; for, if we bear in mind the nature and object of the Divine punishment, we cannot deny that, if the impenitent can suffer after death, by the suffering decreed by God, that is suffering for sin, it is at least a sign of the existence of some degree of spiritual life and perhaps a hope of better things. Certainly, the idea that if a man sins long enough he will at length destroy that in him which alone has power to make him suffer seems infinitely more dangerous to morality than the conception that sin can only fail to satisfy in the end, make burn more fiercely the flame of conscience, and so bring a man by some devious and painful route to that same

goal by which he has refused to travel by the direct and pleasant road.

This interpretation of the forgiveness of sin has, therefore, the advantage that it stands apart from the question of guilt, and so can be freely presented to this age without raising controversies that religion itself is powerless to solve; it does justice both to the religious consciousness of reconciliation and to that conception of law and order pervading the moral realm, which has so strong a hold on the modern mind, and with which no true religion can dare to be in conflict; and it seems to throw light upon those wider hopes of human destiny which apart from this interpretation have always looked either impossible or dangerous. It does nothing to make sin pleasant or to condone its existence, for it sees in the pain of the conscience the great hope of higher life, and it shows that that pain is inescapable wherever sin occurs, and however long the coming of the pain may be delayed; for by the constitution of our nature we cannot isolate ourselves from the Divine presence which is the cause of that pain.

If this conception of the forgiveness of sin can still provide the Church with a message to mankind, and do something to recover the power of the Gospel over our own age, then it will satisfy at least the practical side of the problem, which, as we are so often reminded by those who advocate different solutions from our own, is the main interest to be kept in view, and the chief test that any solution can be expected to satisfy.

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# V

# Sin in relation to the Church's Mission

Some account of how our theory of sin will affect the Church's conception of its mission to the world, will hardly appear irrelevant, and it will supply a test for the practical application of what we have gained that will have greater efficiency and weight than any test of conformity to certain abstract ideas or of philosophical completeness. For after all the immediate duty of any Christian theology is not to compass earth and heaven, yielding a final answer to every question that an ingenious mind can raise, but to present the essence of the Gospel in such a form as shall make it intelligible to its own age. In the past that duty has called theology to defend the liberty of our faith from Judaizers, as with Paul, from ecclesiastics, as with Luther, and now there is deep need to defend it from those betraying friends who would rivet upon the faith ideas that have nothing to do with religion at all, but are merely remnants of discredited science and obsolete philosophies which the modern mind can no longer receive.

For our purpose, the Church may be defined broadly as that organization which exists to perpetuate the Mission of Jesus, and which provides for the Spirit of God a 'body' for His increasing Incarnation.

In the course of our efforts at construction we have found it advisable to attack the problem of sin, not as a mere abstract entity for the existence of which theology must be expected to give a full account, but from the

psychological and religious standpoint, as a consciousness of sin which it is necessary for men to feel if they are to rise to the Christian ideal of humanity, and which can be so explained that the Gospel declaration of sin's forgiveness may be shown to be possible and necessary. The exclusion of the discussion concerning guilt as irrelevant and insoluble, and, in its strict connotation, as prejudicial to the main end of a Christian theology, namely, to make the Gospel interpretation of life reasonable and practical, will open our system to attack in many quarters. But those who claim that this omission is a hopeless defect must remember the practical limitations of our inquiry, and must be prepared to show, first, how guilt can be proved as a fact, either in general or in particular; and then, how guilt can in any way be removed. Surely we cannot have the Christian Gospel reduced to the announcement of a fact that cannot be demonstrated, which afterwards turns out to be a fact that can be annulled in some way incomprehensible to the human mind. Whatever a complete philosophy may require, a Christian theology must be content with such a definition of sin as shall make it possible for God to forgive. The point thus gained must, however, be protected from illegitimate application. Because we have eliminated the factor of guilt, and have thus seemed to secure a solution, we must not be held to assume that this omitted factor is therefore held to be = O. We only maintain that the presence of this factor would not only make the problem insoluble, but that it introduces a factor the value of which is absolutely beyond the judgment of the human mind. Moreover, it cannot be dragged in on the hypothesis that it is a factor realized by the religious consciousness under conviction of sin. That we have shown to be an unwarrantable interpretation of the sense of sin. There is only one remaining objection that might be urged. It might be argued that if guilt cannot be proved or assumed, then we cannot assume that man is free, or that he is conscious of the moral law, and in that case

the proclamation of the Gospel is uncalled for and vain. This is to assume that Kant's argument (namely, that, since man is conscious of the moral law, we must assume that he is also free to perform the moral law, and therefore, if he fails to do so, that he is guilty) can be proved to be true, because if any other conclusion is reached we cannot work back again to the original premise. But Kant's premise is probably wrong, at least in its universal application, for it assumes that there is a consciousness of the moral law equally clear and imperative for all men. It might still be held that if we cannot assume that all men are guilty, then the tragedy of human sin and its consequences are considerably diminished, and that there is no longer any necessity to preach the Gospel. This position is on a level with the objection that if the heathen are not going to Hell there remains no sufficient incentive for the Foreign Mission propaganda; and to state such an attitude is sufficient condemnation of it for all who understand Christ's Gospel; for that Gospel is more than a remedy against Hell: it is a revelation of the possibilities to which man may rise in conscious communion with God; it is an opening of the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers. To argue, moreover, that if men cannot be assumed to be guilty, then they cannot be assumed to be free, arises from the old confusion between real and formal freedom. For while on the one hand the non-assumption of guilt simply leaves the question open, the assumption that men are guilty would, as we have seen, only yield the idea that man's freedom is a power to do anything without motive, reason, or judgment. What we mean by freedom is not the power to do anything whatsoever, but the power to fulfil God's intention for us. Now the transforming of this possibility into actuality depends upon man's knowledge of what his true freedom is, that is, of what he was intended and created to be. The Gospel makes this purpose of humanity known, reveals the power by which it can be accomplished, and creates within man the great desire to

be what God wills us to be. If the race is to fulfil its destiny that Gospel must be brought home to the consciousness of all mankind. For that purpose man need not be assumed to be free so much as *able to be free*, and this ability comes when he is conscious of the moral ideal in Christ.

With these possible objections anticipated and removed it remains to be shown what is the method congruous to our theory of sin by which that sense of sin which is both sin's judgment and sin's Gospel shall be produced. We can surely see that the method which directs us first to prove all men to be guilty sinners, betrays the Church into assuming the function of a judge and trading on the powers of omniscience, and thereby to depart from the example and overstep the commission of her Founder. But if such a method requires the assumption of impossible functions, it also has the grievous disadvantage of being psychologically unsound, and involves the danger of confusing and even denying the religious consciousness. The sense of sin cannot be secured by declaring that all men are guilty, and endeavouring to persuade them of the fact; that would only necessitate the acceptance of a dogma, which, by being confused with the personal sense of sin, might end by being made its substitute, with results disastrous to religion and morals. The sense of sin can only be induced by bringing home to the consciousness an ideal which shall have, on the one hand, immanent connexion with the soul, and, on the other hand, shall stand high enough above the nature to produce self-condemnation of it. If, then, there is such an ideal that can be shown to be the true reality of the soul, and the light by which we must walk, and if it can also be shown to be itself the guarantee that our nature, and our sin, are not such as to prohibit God from visiting us and calling us into fellowship, then we have a message and a power that we can proclaim with urgency and with hope. It would display both unchristian bigotry and lamentable ignorance of life to

deny that there are many methods which have more or less power to satisfy these conditions, but it is beyond doubt that there is no method that has had this power like the method of preaching Christ and Him crucified. It is the duty of the Church to set before every age in such language as is best understood by the people, and in such thought forms as raise fewest intellectual difficulties, the Teaching, the Character, the Work, and the Death of Jesus. These will not be most effectual for the purpose if they are proclaimed as a substitute for a faithless and guilty humanity, or as something external and foreign which we must endeavour to imitate. But, let it be proclaimed to the individual that Jesus is not only Divine, but the Divine intention for humanity, implicit in our own natures, which we were created to fulfil, and yet which we must also realize freely for ourselves; and then will be born a sense of sin which shall not prove a morbid and clogging hindrance to spiritual progress, but its constant spur and its only trustworthy sign. Let there be defined, and applied in terms of our own political, social, and economic thought, the nature, membership, and conditions of the Kingdom of God as expounded by Jesus, and we shall possess the greatest force for bringing about that sense of social sin which shall destroy tyrannies, undermine false empires, and construct amongst us the social order of the New Jerusalem. These aims and methods will recover the loyalty of Christendom to the simple Gospel of Jesus, remove the heavy blame that at present rests upon the Churches, and restore that strong sense of fellowship with God, and co-operation with His purposes, which is so lacking in the modern religious world. This attitude will give the right solution to that much discussed question of the relation of the Church to the Social problem. It would make the Church the greater fount of inspiration for true social reform, and would save us from the unsuccessful experiments and disastrous and despairful results which will be inevitable so long as that reformation is attempted without a recog-

nition of the need of some mighty religious force of the type of which Christ and His Cross are the supreme embodiments.

This attitude limits the Church to its proper task of proclaiming the Gospel, not only in showing that the Church has no right or power to assume the functions of a judge, but in recalling theologians from fruitless controversies and mistaken conflicts with scientific facts and the intellectual tendencies of the age. These are questions on which the Church is not called upon to pronounce, and on which she is powerless to convince, for the eager welcoming of controversial strife has always led to humiliating capitulation. The Gospel of Jesus stands so outside intellectual speculations and scientific hypotheses that it can be stated not only so as to avoid controversy, but it is so capable of re-translation that it can meet any age at its particular stage of mental development, and, starting from this, go on to show that all facts of life and mind but display the great need which the Gospel answers. This sets the Church free to do its own work, and recalls our controversial theologians from pursuing false and dangerous apologetics to their proper task of applying the Gospel to our age, and interpreting it in terms intelligible to the modern mind.

For the hopeful discharge of this task it may be necessary to assume as a working hypothesis, that WHATEVER THE SIN OF THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE SIN OF THE RACE MAY BE, IT MUST BE SOMETHING THAT WILL YIELD BEFORE THE RIPENING PURPOSES OF GOD. Human experiment with sin is doomed to failure; the nature of man contains a Divine element which cannot be satisfied with any condition incongruous to itself, and, because it is Divine, it lies beyond the power of man to destroy it. Somehow and somewhere man must come to himself, however long-deferred the awakening, and however painful the process by which it may be accompanied, and when he comes to himself he will come to God. No other satisfactory meaning can be given to what we denote by human

freedom; man is only, in the end, free to be human as God counts human, as Jesus was human; and man can only, in the end, become what he is free to become; his sins are attempts to find freedom in another direction, and are doomed to failure, to disgust, to repentance, and to the understanding, perhaps far off, but sure at last, that his own nature can be satisfied with nothing but goodness and God. Some such view of man and his sin seems absolutely necessary if we are to preach Christ's Gospel with enthusiasm and without despair. To believe that the Kingdom of God is eminently sane, practicable, and essential to human happiness, is a conviction that must be held if we are to share Christ's hope for the coming of the Son of Man, and to work at His programme with confidence and unquenchable hope. We must feel that this Kingdom is also implicit in humanity, the type of human relationship to which we must come, perhaps after we have tried all others, but none the less sure because it is founded in the nature of things.

Whatever Gospel we hold true for the soul, and whatever ideals we have for society, unless they have their foundations in God's will, and are latent in our humanity, they can only remain eternal contingencies, without any hope of success or guarantee of final victory. And all this runs back to demand a definition of sin as that which God can forgive, and the Gospel remove. Christianity will allow us no more: those who want more must revert to Manichaeism.

# VI

# Sin in relation to a Theodicy

The limitations we have recognized to condition any solution of the problem of sin that we have felt lay open to us, all seem to be due to our complete inability to decide what degree of guilt attaches to man's sin. We retain the term 'sin' to describe that condition and its manifestations which the consciousness of the moral ideal and of the holiness of God condemns, loathes, and desires to rise above; and recognizing this as sufficient we refuse to load the term with the idea of wilful, conscious enmity towards God, or of such a degree of guilt as would make God's forgiveness impossible. This position, as contrasted with the received theology, is mainly negative, but what is retained leaves sin still condemned by the religious and moral consciousness, as that which threatens man with suffering, if persisted in, and that which at all costs must be put away from him. While this limitation of our aims clears from our path a host of initial difficulties, and yet enables us to do justice both to the religious consciousness and to the facts that so greatly impress the modern mind, it leaves us faced with serious difficulties when we come to reconcile our position with the goodness of God, in attempting to construct a Theodicy. But it should be remembered that whatever theory of sin be maintained it will present a deep problem for a Theodicy. If the origin of sin is to be entirely traceable to man as the sole cause and agent, we still have to reckon with the fact that God made man with such capacities that sin was at least a possibility. Nothing can obviate that difficulty. The general defence of this conclusion is that freedom is essential to the idea of man, and, there-

fore, with the very idea of man's existence had to be admitted the possibility of sin. The contingency had to be risked, but the guilt of making it actual rests entirely with man himself. But while this theory of the origin of sin does not clash with the religious consciousness at the outset, as it would do if it made God the author of sin, it fails at the end to satisfy religious trust, in that it leaves the consummation of God's purposes so open to contingency that we have to contemplate the possibility of the eternal defeat of God by man's sin. If man's freedom is to be conceived of such a nature that it must be made possible for him to start out from goodness and yet responsibly and guiltily to fall into sin, then we have to reckon with the introduction into God's universe of a new, destructive, and possibly permanent element of evil. On this conception the future, for ourselves and for the world, is without hope; for no form of goodness we may ever attain will be exempt from sudden reversion; and with human nature endowed with such a capacity for irresponsible mischief, and with such power of creating and perpetuating evil, the coming of the Kingdom of God fades away as an unsubstantial dream. If there are those who would be satisfied with a Divine consummation of all things that excluded from God's presence the finally impenitent, or blotted them out of conscious existence, we still have no assurance that the God who is like Jesus, as Father is like Son, would be satisfied with such a consummation. Would not the everlasting punishment of the wicked entail the everlasting punishment of God, and would not their annihilation be reckoned by Him as the defeat of His Love, rather than the victory of His Justice?

We are not so ambitious as to think we have framed a theory of sin which escapes the general difficulties besetting a Theodicy, and we shall be modest enough to be content if our theory neither makes God the author of guilty sin, nor imperils His Sovereignty and defeats His will, and yet, at the same time, leaves man free. It therefore lightens one end of the problem somewhat to

have such a theory as defines sin to be no permanent element in the universe, since SIN IS SEEN TO CONTAIN WITHIN ITSELF THE SEED OF ITS OWN ULTIMATE DESTRUCTION. Man's sin is therefore not of such a nature that it can wreck the plans of God, indefinitely postpone their fruition, or remain in eternal rebellion against His will. And to make such an end inevitable, it is necessary to show that SIN MUST ALWAYS CONTAIN SOME DEGREE OF IGNORANCE, either in regard to its significance or its contrariness to the moral ideal, and it is necessary to hold that SIN CANNOT CONTINUE PERMANENTLY WITHIN THE DEVELOPING PROCESSES OF HUMAN NATURE. Such conditions our theory of sin seems to observe.

But how are we to conceive of the responsibility of God for that condition of man in which moral ignorance enables him to continue savage, animal, and cruel, and which, when moral consciousness dawns leaves him with such a direful inheritance, without attributing sin to God? We should be open to this charge only if we had maintained that the constitution of man as coming from the hand of God produced inevitably a fully conscious, wilful, and permanent state of rebellion against good; but such an estimate of man's sin we have dismissed as untenable. The primal condition of man as a creature of nature is of itself entirely without sin, as is that of the animals. There is nothing therefore chargeable against God's goodness for creating such a nature. We fail, therefore, to understand the position of those who hold that such a condition, as the antecedent material from which human nature was to be made, is any reflection on the goodness of God. If the charge is rebutted at this stage, then it only remains for it to be advanced on the ground that there was planted within that nature a germ which should gradually develop into consciousness of God; which would be absurd. It only remains, therefore, for us to believe that since human development has followed this course IT WAS ESSENTIAL TO THE TRUE ATTAINMENT OF MAN'S DESTINY THAT HE SHOULD REALIZE

HIMSELF THROUGH STRUGGLE, AND THAT THERE SHOULD BE OPEN TO HIM CERTAIN EXPERIMENTS, WHICH, BEING DOOMED TO FAILURE AND DISSATISFACTION, SHOULD LEAVE FINALLY AND PERMANENTLY OPEN ONLY THE TRUE PATH OF UNION WITH GOD. This constitutes human freedom, that man is permitted to try every path for his own satisfaction, and that nothing is imposed upon him from without; but that freedom is not to be extended to the meaningless libertarianism, which leaves him free to do anything whatsoever for all eternity. If man's path to the goal is to remain his own choice, then such freedom must be granted, but if the goal is to be none the less certain, then man's nature must have an element within it that shall never be satisfied until that goal is attained. By this means we secure both man's freedom and God's sovereignty. We do nothing to prove that man's acts are not his own, or that he is an automaton, but we are not able to press this to mean that man's responsibility is equal to that of a god. Our theory does nothing to affect the feeling concerning sin that must come to a man when he is aware of God's visitation; no theory can alter a feeling, and we have seen that our theory does lay upon the Church the duty of producing that feeling by bringing men to consciousness of God. We are not called upon to assume that all men are conscious of the moral law or of God, but we are bound to assume that they can be. Here psychology, with its theory of consciousness, seems to lift us out of the old dilemma of determinism and free will. MAN IS DETERMINED BY HIS VERY NATURE TO COME FREELY TO GOD. There is nothing here that would cut the nerve of the Church's effort, but rather something that shows how serious is our duty to spread abroad that consciousness of God which has come to us, and which we are bound to believe all men are capable of.

If now we have also seen that the nature man is endowed with, the natural and moral universe with which he is surrounded, and the environing presence and long-

suffering love of God are all combining to lead him to repentance, then the ways of God are justified to men sufficiently to enable us to trust that His unfolding purposes shall prove to be such that when man shall behold their issue he shall be able to thank God for his own being and for the opportunity and discipline of life. There are many questions which might doubtless still be put, to which we have to confess that we know no answer; but we have enough to enable us to live our lives in trust, thankfulness, and hope.

And, finally, if on the grounds of religion and fact, as they appear to us, WE REFUSE TO GRANT THAT QUALITY AND MAGNITUDE TO HUMAN SIN WHICH WOULD DEMAND FOR IT AN ETERNAL PLACE IN THE UNIVERSE, AND AN INFINITE GUILT RESTING UPON MAN, YET OUR POSITION DOES NOTHING TO NECESSITATE OR WARRANT AN ESTIMATE OF SIN WHICH WOULD REDUCE IT TO A MATTER OF NO CONCERN. We adhere to the declaration of the conscience illumined by the revelation of Christ, that any condition which falls short of His standard for the individual or the community is one that ought to be repudiated and cast off, that can be acquiesced in only with ultimate dissatisfaction to ourselves; that any shrinking from, or rebellion against, the light but lays up for us a heritage of sorrowful and painful repentance; and this is so, not because God visits us with a *penalty* for our sin, but because He has hidden within us a Divine nature, and because His great love for us has joined Him to us in indissoluble nearness and unspeakable solicitude; this is the cause of our pain at sin, and the guarantee of its final expulsion from our nature. If there be found those who, despite these repudiations, will still object that our theory, if adopted, would lead men to estimate the sin of their condition, or the sin of their rebellion, as something to be regarded lightly instead of with the uttermost spiritual abhorrence, let them remind themselves that MAN'S JUDGMENT ON SIN MUST ULTIMATELY COINCIDE WITH THAT OF GOD. Man's own nature, which was created to enjoy the blessedness

of God, and God's persistent love for man, which will never let him go, will nullify any false inferences that may be drawn by those who wish to find such excuse for sin as will enable them to continue therein.

Let this then suffice for our guidance in shaping our own life: that all we feel to be sin must cease to be, either by our cheerful acceptance of God's will for us, or only after long and severe discipline has convinced us that God's will and our own deepest desires are for one and the same end. Let this account of sin be sufficient guide for our methods of continuing Christ's ministry and proclaiming His Gospel: to believe that men must needs love our Christ when they truly see Him, and so to seek to bear in upon unconscious sinners by pure example and passionate presentation such a vision of God in Christ as shall make them loathe and flee from their present condition; to tenderly make known to all sin-conscious penitents the gracious interpretation of their pain which shall make it to be the proof of the forgiving attitude of God in that He has condescended to visit them with His salvation; to warn those who appear to be living in conscious violation of all moral and Christian ideals that they are but laying up for themselves a harvest of shame, and vainly attempting to satisfy with sin a nature that was created to find its only Heaven in goodness and its only joy in communion with God.

All other questions we can leave until we know as we are known.

**Now unto Him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins in His Blood, and made us a kingdom, and priests to His God and Father, to Him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. AMEN.**

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